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FROM

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THE HOUSE ON THE SANDS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE COLUMN : a Novel

LOVE WITH HONOUR : a Novel

THE HOUSE ON THE SANDS

By CHARLES MARRIOTT

JOHN LANE: THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON & NEW YORK . MCMIII

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TO
HON. MRS. ANSTRUTHER

THE HOUSE ON THE SANDS

CHAPTER I

EARLIER in the day men had protested against the tyranny of khaki, speaking of business or pleasure with hysterical emphasis as if they had been failing causes. There was an atmosphere of irritation and of apology as before a general surrender ; a desperate struggle of the individual against the overmastering impulse of London. The outward symptoms of revolt were an ill-tempered jostling in the streets, an exaggerated energy in shops and offices. Men shouted angrily where a whisper had sufficed ; they worked as if it were the last day of their lives. But the effort was as futile as if individual particles of water tried to resist a mood of the sea. Gradually, like some paralyzing drug, the khaki fever worked along the streets and into the houses. The effect was visible in a clotting under emotion of the stream of life at street corners, as a solution of

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starch becomes viscid on boiling, each individual particle bursting its envelope and merging with its fellows. The result was not that of mere addition ; a crowd is not the sum of its parts but a new entity, thinking and feeling in round numbers.

The soldiers had captured London's imagination as completely as if they were indeed a hostile army come to take possession of the spoils of war. London thought in khaki. Nobody knew or cared how many or how few were the soldiers : figures meant nothing ; London was filled with soldiers, submerged in khaki.

As the traffic died and people gathered in the streets and at windows, it would have been seen that all their faces were become marvellously alike. They were no longer individuals, they reflected the common mood. Wherever a man moved his feet fell in unison with the feet of the soldiers. Every sound was subordinated to the rhythmic tramp of their feet as the episodes of a great symphony are caught up and interwoven with the development of the main subject. Every man's blood beat to the measure of a marching tune ; abstract man wore khaki, and every other garb was the livery of impotence. Every woman saw her lover in uniform ; for the time being every woman in London, maid, wife, or widow, light or honest, was potentially at the mercy of the soldiers.

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The cheering, at first isolated explosions like gun-firing from this window and that, was taken up by the crowd below, smoothed and pressed by sheer weight of humanity into a long unbroken roar of welcome. The music of the bands was trivial and ridiculous, a momentary blare, a splash of music heard like spray above the thunder of a cataract. The people cheered automatically, without knowledge, without purpose. They stared at the soldiers with dazed eyes and opened their mouths, and the emotion of London escaped through their throats as through the thousand bellowing pipes of a mighty organ controlled by a single hand. From a little distance the sound was rhythmical, rising and falling as the multitude took breath together; less like a sound of joy than the terrorized ululations of slaves at some obscene ceremony. Gradually the cheering tired, sank into a hoarse moaning, rising and falling without volition, like the moaning of the sea, until it was drowned by the tramp, tramp of passing feet. For a long time nobody noticed that the cheering had ceased; mouths remained open, breasts rose and fell. Vision had taken the place of hearing, and, hypnotized by the regular movement of the swinging shoulders, men still heard the roaring that was not. They left off shouting as they had begun, without knowledge. Little by little the homogeneous mass granulated into

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individuals ; eyes lost their cataleptic stare and took on their proper expression of insolence, greed, or cunning. As yet it was impossible for any person to move from his place, but the fickle units visibly turned upon themselves and their own affairs. The striking of matches broke out in a brittle fusillade, and above the odour of sweat and leather arose the pungent smell of tobacco. The crowd had become a rabble.

Godfrey Julian stood at an upper window in Victoria Street looking down at the people. He was a tall, squarely built man, with deep eyes and the grave, unembarrassed expression, the quiet movements which may indicate either great power or mere dulness. He had none of the accidents of distinction ; he was well-dressed, fair-haired, and even wore a moustache, which made him still more like the ordinary type of Englishman turned out by the public schools, to be found by the dozen in the services and, nowadays, in the city. A close observer would have noticed that his hands, unlike the ordinary man's mere extremities, were nervous and full of character. Godfrey Julian was Conservative Member of Parliament for a Cornish division, and had been looked upon as a likely man for early promotion to a responsible position, until he disappointed his friends by resigning the post of private secretary to a Cabinet Minister in order to preserve

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an open mind. He was just forty-one years of age.

When the last of the khaki-clad ranks had swung by, it was Julian's imagination rather than slowness of apprehension which prevented his recognizing that there no longer were any soldiers. All along he had seen less the soldiers than the idea of them. Unconscious that the gaily dressed people in the room beside him had begun to move and chatter, the crowd below to break up and indulge in horseplay, he still gazed out of the window, and heard, as in a dream, their voices. Following on the tail of the soldiers came street hawkers of flags, whistles, and "teasers"—those true artists who, themselves unmoved, work in emotion, and gain their profits from the temporary insanity of their fellows.

The crowd laughed and chaffed. Little snatches of their talk came up to Julian.

"'Oo's got to py for all this? That's wot I want to know."

"Bet ole Kruger sees 'is mistike now."

"Not 'im. 'E's mide 'is little bit of orlright, so wot does 'e care? I shouldn't, if I was 'im."

"Wot I say is this. Wot should we go interferin' with the Bores for? Not but what Salisbury was quite right to declare war when Kruger told 'im to go to 'ell. 'Tisn't to be supposed as

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a man in 'is position is going to stand that. But when 'e'd give 'im a good 'idin' 'e should 'ave left 'im be to come to 'is senses. That's wot 'e should 'ave done."

"Blooming fine soldiers ! Totties in velvet—that's wot the Tommies called 'em. I was torkin' to a lance-corp'r'il in the Middlesex the other dy, an' 'e says——"

A yell of laughter interrupted the speaker, and the people under the window began to push forward and jump, as a gang of boys, armed with broomsticks and shovels, beating on tin cans and sounding penny trumpets, came into sight. In their midst they carried a rude effigy, a cross between Mr. Kruger and that true hero of the Londoner, Ally Sloper.

"Good ole Sloper !" cried a voice.

"'Tisn't Sloper, silly ; cahnt yer see it's Krooger ?"

"No 'tisn't ; look at 'is bottle of Old Tom."

"Well, I dessay ole Krooger likes a drop when 'is missus is aht of the wy."

"This is the Voice of the People ; this is the Mind of the Nation," sounded in Julian's ears in ironic refrain. Not unduly given to sentiment, he had nevertheless felt the solemnity of the occasion, the symbolic importance of those bronzed and ragged men, and the chatter of the crowd jarred upon him. What struck him most acutely

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was not their lightness but their incapacity to understand that there was any principle involved either in the war or in the peace which had just been concluded. For him the war had been neither an accident nor a crime, and he had a profound conviction that with peace the nation had moved forward a step nearer to its Imperial destiny. He was not biassed by class-prejudice ; indeed, the most painful thing of all was the likeness of the smartly dressed men and women by his side to the unwashed rabble in the street. They spoke with a different accent, they did not spit, but they had come together and cheered with the same facility as they now laughed and joked with the same irresponsible change of mood. They too belonged to the crowd, and it was just this new conception of the crowd as distinct from the common people which aroused his uncomfortable reflections. He felt that while he loved the people he hated the crowd.

“ Were those the men that ran away, Julian ? ” said a voice at his elbow.

Julian turned impatiently on the speaker, a florid, elderly man with prominent brown eyes and a grey torpedo beard. This was Sir Peter Lawrence, the shipowner, in whose office they were assembled. Seeing the look of confusion on Sir Peter’s face, Julian mastered his irritation, and quietly explained the title and

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record of the men whose tramping feet still sounded in his ears. It was noticeable that when Julian began to speak the chattering in the room ceased, and everybody looked at him. It was equally obvious that they did not look and listen because they expected him to say something smart. You can tell the professional wit by the expression of his audience's faces the moment he opens his mouth. Julian's hearers emphatically became an audience because he unconsciously exacted the same attention he himself gave to the merest trifler. He bent his mind to the speaker of the moment, and this made many people think him stupid, though he was never disregarded. As he went on gravely telling the moving story his voice shook a little, and his eyes wandered along the row of upturned faces as if seeking one person at least who understood. They finally rested on a big, handsome woman with yellow hair, whose likeness to himself proclaimed her his sister. Michal Julian glanced back at her brother with a smile of comprehension. It was evident that they shared ideas and confidences above the heads of their companions in the room, and a perceptive observer would have been a little afraid that Michal did her brother the injustice of accepting him as a finished product. It would be difficult for him to change in any way without damaging her ideas of him.

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When Julian had finished his tale, Sir Peter murmured a verse of Kipling, and immediately looked round to see if he had done the right thing. Again Julian met his sister's eyes, but this time Michal's look of quizzical sympathy changed to one of pleading. Her wish that Julian would be indulgent was explained when she looked away from him and her eyes rested tenderly on a graceful girl in white who, herself in the shadow, gazed up shyly but anxiously into Julian's face.

Amy Lawrence looked better bred than her father. Her features were irregular, but her large brown eyes were full of intelligence, and her mouth was very sensitive. Her brown hair grew prettily round her finely shaped forehead, and her skin was delicately clear. Amy was looking her best to-day, and she knew it; but her hope that Julian would look at her was not due to vanity: she simply wanted to please him.

As if he understood his sister's glance Julian turned and looked down at Amy Lawrence. Her eager expression misled him into supposing that she had spoken.

"I'm sorry to be so inattentive," he stammered; "what were you saying?"

He seated himself beside her, and the women near them looked one at the other and smiled.

"Oh, I wasn't saying anything," said Amy,

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in a low voice. " Little girls should be seen and not heard."

The delicacy of her intonation fulfilled the promise of her exquisite mouth. Though her tone was light enough there was a real challenge in her eyes, and she coloured with vexation when Julian laughingly paid her the compliment her thoughtless remark invited. They were on sufficiently intimate terms to make use of personalities, but Julian's readiness only convinced her that he did not care. To do Amy justice, she would not have accepted a proposal from him while she felt uncertain of his affection. Her one grain of comfort was that apparently he did not care for any other woman.

It was perhaps fortunate for Amy that she did not know what was passing through Julian's mind as he sat talking to her. He was very sorry that she had come. She was the one woman he preferred before any other except his sister, and he would have been glad to keep his illusions about her. Somehow she had come badly out of the test of this occasion, for him a great one. He did not wish her to be profound, but he was disappointed to find her wanting in simplicity. At this moment she was altogether charming with her quick changes of colour and the golden spark coming into her eyes when she smiled ; but this only exaggerated her facile

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relapse, a few minutes before, into the general blatancy. She showed badly under excitement, her voice became thin and screamy, and Julian thought there was a touch of ugliness and vulgarity in her observations on the soldiers summed up in "Oh, they're perfectly lovely!" He could not remain satisfied with a woman who needed to be considered in a half-light, and that Amy had succumbed to the surroundings of the moment was a fatal defect in her to his mind.

They had to move their chairs to make way for the people who wished to leave the room, and after the business of handshaking was over, Julian returned to his place by the window. He felt hipped and discouraged ; all his ideals seemed to be going to pieces at the same time. For twelve years he had believed that Parliament represented the people, and it was only lately that he had been harassed and perplexed by the insincerity of both friends and foes of the Government. The stern discipline of the last two years had taught Julian that the voice of the critic like that of the defender of the Government was not the voice of the people, but the voice of the crowd. There was the same difference between the people and the crowd as between the plain person and the man in the street. It may seem surprising that Julian had been a member of Parliament for twelve years without discovering

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this truth, but it must be remembered that nothing blindsfolds a man like success. His career had developed automatically, with only a perfunctory reference to the causes he was supposed to represent. To-day brought the final and humiliating discovery that, in his official capacity, he himself represented not the people but the crowd.

Once more the voice of Sir Peter Lawrence broke into his reverie.

"The cares of State sit heavy on his brow," said the shipowner, jocularly, as Julian turned a confused face to the little group.

Only Michal, Amy, and Sir Peter were left in the room. They, evidently, had been talking about him, and Sir Peter's words and the expression of his face suggested that he had been trying to reassure the other two. Michal, however, looked unconvinced and anxious, and it was easy to see that Amy felt snubbed. The cold, bare surroundings of the room, the harsh office furniture and explicit drawings on the walls, enhanced her look of almost tremulous sensibility, and she was plainly not far from tears.

Sir Peter Lawrence had the tact of a steam-roller. He knew a great many things, but he did not know when to hold his tongue, and he had a perfectly disastrous habit of trying to cheer people up.

"Come round and dine with us, Julian," he

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said, placing his hand on Julian's arm, a trick he, of all men, detested. "We are quite alone. I've asked your sister, and she says that you have no engagements."

Sir Peter's tone suggested, as he probably intended it should, a little consolatory function for a gentleman in the blues. Julian excused himself reasonably enough. He reminded Michal that they were going down to Cornwall in two days' time, and that he was very busy; but Sir Peter continued to press him until Amy, in sheer desperation, came forward and held out her hand.

"I suppose we shan't see you again before you go?" she asked. There was a "What-have-I-done?" expression in the girl's eyes which made Julian feel very brutal.

"No, I'm afraid not," he said hastily. After all, there is a certain grim mercifulness in the social formulæ which prevent explanations. Julian knew that, so far as he was concerned, Amy had done nothing. It was her misfortune to be simply herself.

CHAPTER II

THE Julians of Trelogan were the unnamed branch of a famous West Country family. Old Mr. Julian, Godfrey's father, had put up for Parliament, but was not successful, as before the Gladstonian split the constituency was mainly Liberal in its views. Even those who voted against him, however, regretted his failure, for he was a good landlord and an untiring champion of the local fishermen already beginning to suffer from the competition of the better organized fleets from North Sea ports, which annually come to Cornwall for the mackerel season. The Home Rule question entirely altered the balance of opinion in this district, as in so many others, and Godfrey was invited to stand for, and returned to Parliament by the same people who had voted unwillingly against his father. It would have been difficult to find a constituency with a happier combination of personal friendship and political agreement between the member and those he represented. This was not due to coddling, for Godfrey Julian spent very little of his time at home. He was fortunate in his agent, and was content to leave his own reputation to the judgment of his

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supporters. A Cornishman himself, he had a good deal of the racial pride, and instinctively respected the Cornishman's intolerance of patronage. He knew that the greatest compliment he could pay his tenants was to let them take him for granted, and that the one thing they would have resented would have been his explaining his long absences from home.

Trelogan is a small estate about eight miles from Porthia, and close to the mining town of Tolcarne. The house is a fifteenth-century granite building, long and low, with mullioned windows, tall, twisted chimneys, leaded cupolas, and a slate roof without eaves, standing in well-wooded grounds, all the more charming by contrast with the desolate character of the surrounding country. Outside the belt of trees girdling Trelogan there is hardly a stick of timber bigger than a thorn-bush within sight. Northwards, the Trelogan estate marches with the sea ; but on every other side are barren hills surmounted by ruined engine-houses, very characteristic and as picturesquely suggestive in their way as Rhine castles. To the stranger they are at first an offence, but the eye quickly gets used to them, and, after a while, looks for the familiar tall buildings as the culminating incidents in the monotonous curves of moorland. They give grip and distinction to the skyline, and in themselves

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they have all the pathetic suggestion of failure ; unlike most evidences of human activity they have blasted nothing, and in tone and colour they have the same quality, as to all outward appearance they are of the same age, as the prehistoric remains, the stone circles and cromlechs, scattered about this part of the country.

Godfrey Julian and his sister cared too much for their country house to turn it into an hotel, and entertained only neighbours or intimate friends who like themselves needed an occasional retreat from the activities of town life. This morning, in late July, they sat over their breakfast in that sociable silence which comes of complete sympathy. They had returned from London the night before after an absence of nearly two years from Trelogan.

Michal Julian was eight years younger than her brother, kept youthful in her appearance by the freshness of her intellectual interests. She, like him, was tall and fair-haired, but more positive in colouring, fastidiously neat in her dress, and deliberate in her movements. She had that purity of expression which is the gift of energetic and well-disciplined natures ; and because she was so completely mistress of herself, stupid people called her passionless. She was not to be surprised or cajoled into sympathy with anything or anybody against her perceptions. This made her

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somewhat exacting in her standard of people, but it saved her from making mistaken friendships. When she gave herself, she gave with the deliberate but uncalculating generosity of reserved natures which possess all of themselves to give. Michal was too fastidious intellectually to be a political woman, but she was very ambitious for her brother, and her careful study of his interests taught her that while it was to his advantage to live a full social life, it was very necessary that his mind should be left free to his work. She had long ago made her final choice in love, but since her love was too sacred a thing to risk in conflict with her duty to her brother, she had never told even him. She believed that Godfrey needed somebody to lay out and put away his social clothes ; somebody, in fact, to fulfil the office of the *Flappers* in Swift's *Laputa*. Nobody could do this so well as a woman, and Michal felt that until Godfrey married the right woman, it was her duty to remain absolutely at his disposal. She herself believed that the right woman was growing up in Amy Lawrence, but she had no wish, even if it had been possible, to choose Godfrey's wife for him. The mere fact that her own love waited on his marriage, tied her hands as a matchmaker. If he never married at all, neither would she.

Michal's own shrinking from the vulgarity of

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party politics made her all the more sympathetically aware of the crisis in her brother's mental history. She watched him lovingly, but did not bother him with questions. At this moment the little scene in Sir Peter Lawrence's office was very fresh in her mind. She did not understand Godfrey's dissatisfaction with things in general, including Amy Lawrence, but she made up her mind that she would talk the matter over with Randal Tate, who was coming down to Trelogan in a week or so. It was a pity, she thought, that Randal Tate had not been with them on the day the soldiers came home. He was not very enthusiastic about Amy Lawrence, and he openly scoffed at Sir Peter, but he certainly understood things.

Presently Godfrey looked up from his letters.

"Do you know anything about a man named Christopher Lanyon, a tenant of ours?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Michal. "He took over the tin-streaming at Chy-an-dreath about three years ago."

There was a want of cordiality in her answer which, however, escaped her brother's notice.

"Of course, I remember now," he said. He took up his letter again, and continued reading with a smile.

Michal looked rather more interested than the circumstances demanded.

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"Has Mr. Lanyon written to you, Godfrey?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Julian, without looking up; "he wants some alterations in his dressing-floors."

"Then why didn't he speak to Mr. Trevail?" said Michal, coldly.

"He has done so, but as it was a rather expensive job, Trevail didn't care to decide on his own responsibility, and so referred him to me. I'll ride over this afternoon and see him about it. . . . Quaint letter for a tin-streamer, isn't it?" he said, tossing the paper across the table.

He watched Michal while she read the letter, as if he were waiting to see whether she would smile at the points which had amused him. But Michal did not seem at all amused, and her expression interested him. Michal, like most naturally frank persons, was not successful in concealing disapproval. Julian became curious to know the cause of her obvious dislike of the writer of the letter, which she quietly folded and placed in its envelope. She did not speak until she had poured herself out another cup of coffee, but her face was very thoughtful.

"Is it necessary for you to go and see Mr. Lanyon yourself, Godfrey?" she asked presently, with assumed carelessness.

"Why not? I think I ought to go and see

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what he wants since he has applied to me personally," said Julian.

"I should have thought——" she began; and then, "Why can't you send over a man to make an estimate, and then let Mr. Lanyon know whether you care to undertake the improvements or not?"

Julian saw that Michal wanted to argue the matter without being driven to say what she thought about Mr. Lanyon. She wished, evidently, to prevent a meeting between the tin-streamer and himself, but it was unlike her not to give her reasons frankly. Fond as he was of his sister, Julian did not like the idea of being managed.

"I could do that, of course," he said; "but I think it is a good plan to be civil to tenants, don't you? Besides," he added, picking up the envelope, "I'm interested. I don't think Mr. Lanyon is quite an ordinary tin-streamer, is he?"

Michal coloured slightly: she disliked being forced to speak even by her brother, and felt that she was losing her temper while he remained cool and apparently amused.

"He isn't, I'm glad to say," she answered rather sharply.

"You don't like him?" asked Julian, raising his eyebrows. "Has he ever done anything to annoy you?"

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"No; he has never spoken to me nor I to him," said Michal, quietly. "I have formed my opinion of that man entirely from what I have heard about him."

Her emphasis on "that man" made Julian feel inclined to tease her for this unexpected betrayal of feminine prejudice. He was checked, however, by the cold gravity of her manner, which led him to suspect that she really had some serious objection to Lanyon's character. Still, why didn't she say so? As a general rule, Julian took his sister's advice in minor matters, but just because she would not speak out he felt disposed to argue.

"You would rather I did not see him?" he asked.

Michal answered him with another question.

"Don't you think it's a pity to be at the beck and call of your tenants when you have a good agent to look after your affairs? It seems to me rather a reflection upon Mr. Trevail."

This was too transparent, and Julian laughed.

"My dear Michal," he said, "Trevail will be very stupid if he doesn't understand."

Michal fidgeted with her cup.

"Of course you know your own business best," she said, "but it seems to me that Mr. Lanyon is merely trying to assert his importance by dragging you over to Chy-an-dreath."

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“He’s that sort of person, is he ?” said Julian, with a grim smile. “However, in his letter he doesn’t even hint that he wants me to come.”

“Well,” said Michal, giving up the argument, “I understand that he’s a most objectionable person in every way.”

She took up a newspaper and unfolded it, but did not read. Both she and her brother were conscious of restraint, and Julian was reminded of his occasional suspicion that feminine co-operation had certain disadvantages which justified a man in reserving a corner of his affairs from the most loyal woman. It was true that Michal never interfered in his work, but she was identified with a side of himself which he was just at present inclined to quarrel with. He had begun to question some of the things which Michal most appreciated. His interest in Lanyon was not diminished by Michal’s curious display of prejudice; he felt that she would not speak strongly about a person of no consequence, and he was in a mood to make experiments. Therefore, on his morning ride with Mr. Trevail over the estate, he asked—

“Who is Christopher Lanyon ?”

Trevail looked sharply at him.

“He works the stream over to Chy-an-dreath,” he said. “The place had gone to rack and ruin when he took it in hand.”

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Mr. Trevail looked like a clergyman in mufti. His very dark blue eyes were set in a brown wrinkled face fringed with grey whiskers. He wore a low-cut waistcoat, and his collar, though rather frayed, was spotless, and crossed by the thin black cord attached to the *pince-nez* he used when writing. He looked as if he ought to have worn a stock, and his manners had an old-fashioned touch which bore out the same suggestion. He had been employed by Godfrey's father, and he regarded the estate as a personal trust which he would have answered for, if necessary, with his life.

The tone of apology, of justification almost, in his reply was not lost upon Julian.

“He is a good tenant, then?”

“None better, Mr. Julian,” said Trevail, gravely. “I wish everybody made their interests agree so well with ours,” he added, pointing with his whip to a field of thistles.

Julian thought that Trevail’s appreciation of Lanyon suggested that he hoped nobody had maligned the tin-streamer to his landlord.

“Mr. Lanyon has written to me about some improvements he wants making in his machinery,” he said.

“I’m glad to hear it,” said Trevail, cordially. “I did not care to decide the matter myself, but, if you’ll excuse me, Mr. Julian, I think it

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would be to your advantage to consider him favourably. What he asks is very reasonable, I believe, and would increase the value of the property."

"I shall certainly take your advice," said Julian; and Mr. Trevail bowed.

They rode in silence for some distance, and then Julian asked—

"Mr. Lanyon makes a good thing out of the stream?"

"Oh yes, I think," said Trevail; and, after a minute, "Of course, he is able to do better than if he were dependent upon it."

"He has money, then?"

"Not a great deal," said Trevail; adding, with a smile, "He says he has just enough to make a hobby profitable."

His anxiety to commend Lanyon as a tenant without discussing him as a man was so puzzling that Julian continued—

"He's an African miner, I suppose?"

"Oh no; he's a gentleman by birth, I believe. At one time he used to write for the papers, he told me, but came into a little money, and after travelling abroad for a while, decided to settle down here. He took up tin-streaming more to pass the time than anything. He is a very industrious man."

It was quite evident, thought Julian, that

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Christopher Lanyon needed an explanation, which both Michal and Trevail, probably for different reasons, were unwilling to give. He did not press the agent further, but when their round was finished, and they parted at the drive-gate, Trevail said, rather anxiously—

“ If I might make the suggestion, Mr. Julian, you would be interested in Cap’n Lanyon. He would be proud to talk to you, I’m sure, and you would find him a very intelligent man.”

CHAPTER III

AS Julian rode out of the drive-gate of Trelogan on his way to Chy-an-dreath, he wondered, half-humorously, how Lanyon would receive him. His letter had suggested, though not in words, the hope for a better acquaintance, but it was quite possible that he would regard Julian's visit as unnecessary, if not an impertinence. For some distance Julian's way was over high ground traversed by a grassy ride. To his right was the sea, separated from the road only by a narrow strip of unreclaimed moorland covered with gorse and heather dwarfed by the wind; but on the left, broad pastures, speaking in their condition of the energy and discrimination of Mr. Trevail, descended in sweeping curves into the valley. The whole countryside looked austere pros-
perous, the absence of trees giving an ascetic character even to cultivation.

It was a bright afternoon, and the height, the space, the springy turf underfoot, and the fine, brisk air from the north-west all helped to raise Julian's spirits. Beyond his momentary sense of well-being was a pleasant feeling of anticipation; he was prepared to be interested. He had no

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idea of Lanyon's condition : Mr. Trevail had not told him if he was married or what was the extent of his household. As he rode, Julian speculated on the probable reason for Michal's dislike of the tin-streamer. If Lanyon were a drunkard, Mr. Trevail was the last man in the world to speak a good word for him ; and the other subject for local censure, irreligion, was no affair of Michal's, so that Julian was forced to conclude that, after all, she was repelled by mere personal antipathy.

Tempted by the day, Julian had taken the longest way round to Chy-an-dreath. He followed the line of the coast until he came to the headland of Pen Enys, which forms the eastern extremity of the great bay of Porthia. Immediately below him was the reef and island, with its lighthouse surrounded by a white wall like a fortification. Beyond the headland the cliffs declined into a wide sandy reach, curving round the bay and bounded on its western side by the jutting promontory, the so-called Island of Porthia. In spite of the distance, Julian could see the windows of the huddled fishing town sparkling in the afternoon sun. At his feet, in the elbow of the headland, the sea was stained blood-red by the metallic waters of a river which, after passing Chy-an-dreath, here found its way over the sand. On a level with the island there was a hard line of division between the broad band of red water and

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the rest of the sea. Across the bay the skyline was cut by the noble chain of hills beginning with triple-horned Carn Brâs and stretching away to the Dragon's Head, the last visible point in the distance.

The feeling of space was intensely exhilarating, and Julian kept his horse at a walking pace to get the full effect of his surroundings as he descended the grassy slope on the other side of the headland. Turning to the left, he entered the broad, shallow valley through which the Red River silently passed on its way to the sea.

The moment he turned the corner the noise of the sea was suddenly reduced to a rushing murmur, an echo of the actual sound as if heard in a great shell. He was now in a region of sand. The firm, springy turf gave place to coarse grass, scant and scurfy at the roots like the hair of an animal afflicted with some disease. To his left, and shutting out the sea, rose the great hills, locally, "towans," of blown sand, partly covered with grey-green rushes, but in places bare. On the landward slope the rushes had been planted by hand, drilled out in straight rows to multiply and check the desolating advance of the sand. The outline of the sandhills against the sky was wild and fantastic, so that the enclosed basin was not unlike the crater of an extinct volcano. Here and there some recent effect of the wind was

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recorded as in drifted snow. What little vegetation could subsist was grey or blue in colour, and thick-rooted, as if compelled to live on its own substance.

As Julian rode, the ground, muffled in sand, gave back no sound to his horse's hoofs. The only moving thing visible, he might have been a knight of the Grail riding into a valley of enchantment. In spite of its melancholy, the place had a singular charm, an air of chastity and reticence. There was a great silence, for the echo of the sea was rather a heightening of silence than a sound in itself. It was like silence become audible. The air was still, the sky hard and blue. The great cliffs of sand shone white and dazzling, quivering in the heat like a mirage.

Set in the midst of this waste of sand, looking strangely black and ugly, was the tin-streamer's dwelling—a square granite house backed by ruinate workshops and sheds hardly more coherent than the piles of wreckwood flung together in the foreground. There was no garden, no attempt at enclosure, nothing but sand. Silently through this irregular clearing ran the Red River, as if hurrying to lose in the sea the untold secret of its origin in the dark mine under the hills. The whole scene was indescribably desolate, inhumanly lonely, yet with a magical

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fascination of its own. It was a Limbo—a dwelling for disembodied spirits rather than human beings.

Julian rode round the back of the house to get to the works, and as he passed the window, he heard a woman's voice, rich and full, singing an old air of Bishop's. In spite of the florid character of the music, with its runs and repetitions, it had a curious vitality, a throbbing pulse of passion, as one might conceive a real heart beating under the frills and laces of an eighteenth-century "Phyllis." Practically, the song gave Julian a shock of surprise; emotionally, he agreed that it belonged well to the surroundings of the moment. He felt that the singer should have such a face as might look out of "magic casements;" and there, in fact, was the "perilous sea"—a long line of reddened foam across the mouth of the estuary.

Julian, whose imagination was keenly alive to the power of music, had the vision of a captive princess able to find freedom only in song. He halted, listening to the singer with an attention that would have surprised those who knew him only as a very practical member of Parliament.

As Godfrey Julian sat on his horse, with bent head, listening to the singer, Christopher Lanyon came silently round the corner of the house. The pricking up of the animal's ears caused Julian to

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turn his head, and he saw Lanyon looking up at him.

Julian had a disagreeable sense of being taken at a disadvantage, and his first impression of Lanyon was hostile, though he knew that his silent approach was entirely accidental, inevitable even, from the muffling carpet of sand.

Christopher Lanyon was a middle-aged man of sallow complexion, with keen, dark eyes and a short grey beard. One surmised that his hidden mouth was ironical. His thick-set, athletic figure was clothed in a double-breasted, blue serge coat and trousers, giving him something of the appearance of a merchant skipper. He greeted Julian cordially, addressing him by name, and neither by word nor look asking the reason for his visit. Julian dismounted and tied his horse to a post. Standing beside Lanyon he saw that he was considerably below the middle height, and this gave him an odd feeling of satisfaction. It was as if, and for some reason he did not understand, they were to be compared together by some person who was not yet apparent. Lanyon led Julian round to the works as if he took it for granted his landlord would pay him only a business visit.

“ You are acquainted with our primitive methods, Mr. Julian ? ” he asked. His voice was pleasant, but rather ostentatiously careless in tone.

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"I know the general principle of the thing," said Julian, "but I'm ashamed to say that I've never studied the machinery in detail."

Lanyon nodded as if Julian's ignorance were no more than he had expected.

"In spite of its ramshackle appearance it answers very well," he said; "it is difficult to see how it could be improved essentially. You see, the general principle is the adjustment of levels. I don't know if you have our racial passion for machinery, Mr. Julian?" he asked, as if apologizing for possibly boring his visitor. "To me the whole thing is fascinating. You are a kind of Fate; you seduce the stuff into the belief that it is washing itself. This"—he pointed to a slowly revolving, overshot water-wheel—"is the *primum mobile* of the whole concern. The rest, like life, looks fortuitous, but, also like life, it isn't. At a first glance there is no visible connection between those wheels. There is one spinning round as if the peace of Europe depended upon so many revolutions per minute; close beside it is another, walloping round the opposite way, and so slowly and uncertainly that it appears always on the point of stopping. It has, you observe, one bucket, and—— There, look!"

Lazily, carelessly as it appeared, the bucketful of liquid mud was lifted and dropped into a higher channel.

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“Now,” continued Lanyon, “there’s a wheel over there with a brush attached to it. If you’ll watch, you’ll see that always at the right moment, and not before the right moment, the brush clears out the channel and lets the water run on. The whole thing is so beautifully simple!” he cried enthusiastically—“as little interference as possible, no forcing the pace, but merely taking advantage of the eternal fact that water will find its own level. Now, look at these trays.”

He led Julian to the dressing-floors, where the mud was distributed over a flat, gently sloping board, and covered with the merest film of running water.

“You see the little tank at the top gradually filling until it is heavy enough to overbalance, then—tip!—and the whole thing begins over again. One aims, you see, at patient economy: wash, wash, wash; filter, filter, filter, until you have got practically every particle of tin out of the stuff.”

“It is diabolically ingenious,” said Julian, thoughtfully, after they had discussed the proposed improvements.

Lanyon shrugged his shoulders, laughed a little falsetto laugh, and glanced at Julian, as if to see how far he might venture.

“The point is,” he said dryly, “that the system recognizes the character and properties

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of the material it has to deal with. It humours it, if you will."

Julian laughed frankly.

"You mean to say that so many systems don't do that—political systems, for example?"

Lanyon bowed.

"Precisely," he said. "The shortest and most comprehensive criticism of any political or social system is that it disregards human nature. Of course it is very much easier to base a system on a preconceived theory than on observed facts. Once started, the thing keeps going in an arbitrary sort of way; but if you want to work honestly with your material, you have to use your powers of observation all the time, as the Americans say. You have to devise these apparently fortuitous little wheels and buckets."

They moved off to another place, both silent and thoughtful.

"It seems a great deal of manipulation for a very small result," said Julian, pointing to the small quantity of brownish-black powder which a man was collecting.

"Yes," admitted Lanyon; "but, you see, it is something definite, something done, however little. It is true that, as in—other places—there has been a lot of apparently unnecessary discussion by the way, but here is undeniable tin oxide."

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Julian took up some of the dark powder in his hand.

" You are thinking that the game seems hardly worth the candle ? " asked Lanyon, politely.

Julian nodded.

" Well, " said Lanyon, " it is just a paying hobby. After deducting working expenses, wages, etc., it gives me about three per cent. interest on my capital."

" But you might get that out of a very ordinary investment ? "

Lanyon brought his hand sharply down on the edge of the tub.

" That is precisely my point, Mr. Julian, " he said gravely. " This is an investment, and of the only kind I know that is essentially honest. Every other form of interest is somebody's loss, but this hurts nobody. You'll pardon my implicit criticism of what perhaps are your own methods. I am the victim of ideas—a crank, if you will—and when I came into my little fortune and looked round for some concern to put it into, I do assure you that there was no single one which did not place me in a false position and make me feel a thief. The economists would tell you that all business is dishonest in the abstract ; I don't think the economists have considered tin-streaming. However, " he said, with a shrug and a laugh, " we shall get into deep waters. I will only point

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out to you the advantage of investment in a business which gives you an intellectual pleasure in its working, and yet leaves your mind free for other things."

Julian found it difficult to tear himself away from the fascinating place, and from Lanyon, who, pleased by his interest, showed off his machinery as one would a favourite horse.

"The thing is organic," he said; "improvements are implied before you think of them. Without any radical alteration this machinery could be developed until it became almost human. I don't believe the idea could have originated anywhere but in Cornwall. I dare say you've noticed the Cornish almost uncanny instinct, amounting to genius, for the control of water. Other people are content to use the brute force of water to make a wheel go round, but the Cornishman tames and develops its intelligence, thinning it out to a mere thread, and yet managing to get work out of it."

They had passed round the works and returned to where Julian had tethered his horse. The time had passed without notice. The vivid light had faded from the sandhills leaving them wistfully sad. The singer within the house had ceased, and the only sounds were the crawling murmur of the surf and the melancholy lowing of a hooter-buoy over by the lighthouse.

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Julian took out his watch.

"It is five o'clock!" he cried in surprise.

"You will do me the honour to take a cup of tea with me?" said Lanyon, politely.

Julian hesitated. Interesting as Lanyon was, there was yet a dismally detached, unhuman quality in his manner as if he stood outside of everything. Though not superstitious Julian was imaginative, and it seemed to him that a great deal in the future depended upon his relations with Lanyon. But after his vivid interest in the work he felt lonely and sad. Of late the *raison d'être* of his life had been less obvious: he was ready for fresh ideas. At the back of everything was the subconscious wish to penetrate into Lanyon's domestic life. Michal's coldness, Trevail's reticence, came back to him with a new meaning; and he remembered the mystical voice of the singer. He had the feeling that something was going to happen, and if Lanyon had been Mephistopheles himself he could not have spoken at a better moment. Lanyon did not press his invitation.

"Thank you," said Julian. "I shall be delighted."

Lanyon called a man to take Julian's horse round to the stable, and they went indoors. After the pale tones of the sky and sand outside, the house seemed rather dark and chilly. They

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went down a passage, and turned to the left into a room looking towards the estuary.

The breadth and simplicity of the long levels of sea and sand were reproduced in the room by the straight lines of the unupholstered oak furniture and the absence of drapery. There were no pictures on the brown-paper covered walls, but, opposite the window, a circular mirror framed in beaten copper gave back the violet-greys of the outlook. The lack of cosiness in the room suggested that the people who used it were quakerishly averse from luxury, or that they were too much alive to need the ordinary appointments of leisure. The nearest word that Julian could find to describe the prim, cold atmosphere of the place was old-maidish.

A woman lay stretched on a cane lounge-chair by the window. She rose as they entered, not hurriedly, but with the energetic movement of youth, and Julian saw that she was tall and slender with long white hands. She was dressed in grey, she had boldly cut features, dark hair, and wide grey eyes.

Lanyon's introduction was simplicity itself.

"Mr. Julian, Audrey Thurston." There was no addition of "Miss" or "Mrs.," nothing to indicate her position in the household; and, somehow, the woman seemed not to need any artificial distinction. She was *Audrey Thurston*.

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The woman bowed, but did not offer Julian her hand. He was not a conceited man, but he could not help feeling a little surprised by the absence of *gaucherie* from her manner. As one entirely outside himself, he reflected that an introduction to a man in his relative position could not be an everyday occurrence with her, and he looked for a little flustered appreciation of the event. A moment later he felt a horrid prig, and recognized that Audrey Thurston was watching him with interest rather than respectful curiosity. Externally she was quiet, but her eyes had a look of quick speculation. She even seemed slightly amused, and when Lanyon spoke, and she turned her head to him, Julian had the fleeting idea that he also was included in her ironical survey of things in general. Her glance at Lanyon was slightly compassionate.

A neatly dressed maid brought in tea. There was no suggestion of "best things" for the occasion, and it was evident that these people were habitually dainty in their appointments; though Lanyon drank his tea and ate his cake with a contemptuous indifference, as if he would imply that refinement was a concession. This, thought Julian, was the disagreeable side of him; he conceded everything.

The entire absence of fuss, her graceful taking him for granted, made Julian feel that his meeting

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with Audrey Thurston was a recognition rather than a new acquaintance. He had the flattering sense that she had thought about him. When she spoke to him, it was like resuming a conversation.

She began without preliminaries to talk about his work, not as if it were the proper thing to do, but because she was, and had been, interested. Her childlike freshness and eagerness prevented Julian from being disconcerted by her unconventional plunge into essential matters. It was evident that while she was ignorant of the ins and outs of party questions, she had thought about the large general tendencies of politics, and had arrived at strikingly sane though novel conclusions; as if she looked at things from a remote point of view, and, consequently, got them into perspective. Her use of words was curiously personal, as if she did not often get the chance to talk, and therefore weighed each expression as it came to her lips. She spoke with the pleasing correctness of an educated foreigner, who is naturally more appreciative of the value of a language he has acquired than a native who speaks it by instinct. Julian had the flattering feeling that she perceived and addressed the higher and less obvious side of him. It may be noted that this was the first time he felt quite sure that his newly awakened dissatisfaction with his party was a symptom of that

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higher self. In answer to Audrey's question, whether the Government was going to take any serious advantage of what she described as "this very big opportunity," Julian said gravely—

"To be frank, I'm afraid not. But, after all, it isn't altogether the fault of the Government. When a man has to give all his time to defending his past actions, you can't blame him for neglecting the future. So far as I can see, the next session will be wasted in trying to answer questions that can't be answered."

"Then you are disappointed?" she asked.

"That suggests superiority to the rest of us, doesn't it?" said Julian, with a laugh.

"Well, why not?" she answered bluntly. "If you can see a little farther than most people, why need you be ashamed to say so?"

"There's a good deal of sound common sense in the average mind," objected Julian.

"Yes, when you can get at it."

"Well, this is an age of plain speaking."

"Yes, but not of plain meaning. Just now everybody seems to be shouting 'Efficiency' at the top of his voice, but nobody quite knows what he means by it. I believe the general idea is that it is a new special subject taught in the Board Schools. You are to abolish a thing vaguely called 'influence,' and estimate a man's efficiency by competitive examination open to everybody."

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“Papers to be sent in to Dalmeny not later than the next general election,” observed Lanyon, with a sneer. “Meanwhile, it’s just as well to remember that such an obsolete authority as the Church Catechism says something about doing your duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call you. I’m not a Churchman myself, but I like to see the right people get the credit for ideas.”

Julian found Lanyon less attractive indoors. His shrugging cynicism seemed more marked, and as if assumed to create an impression. Julian felt that he was being indulged, and there is perhaps nothing more galling to a man who takes his profession seriously than to be indulged. It is a pity that the story of Romulus and Remus isn’t true: if ever a man deserved a violent death it was the jumper of walls.

Lanyon went on to say that, speaking of ideas, he had been reading Julian’s article on “State Responsibility” in the *Imperial Review*, and that there was something in it.

“Ten years ago,” he said, “I preached the same doctrine myself, but nobody would listen. Since then I have given up all hope of everything. My life down here may be taken as expressing my state of mind. I look on.”

“But you forget, Chris,” said Audrey, eagerly, “that the point of Mr. Julian’s article is not

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whether State conducted industries pay, but that the time has come when the question whether a thing will pay or not must be disregarded; that if we are to move forward, there must be a sacrifice all round of immediate material prosperity for the sake of the future."

Lanyon's manner seemed to convey that if it were worth while he could be illuminating. He did not say much, but his glance at Audrey was a reproof. She coloured slightly, as if reminded of an indiscretion. It occurred to Julian that one explanation of Lanyon's isolated life was disappointed ambition. That single remark, "nobody would listen," seemed the keynote of his grievance against the world, and suggested that he was jealous of another man trying, and possibly succeeding, where he had failed. His suppression of Audrey Thurston threw some light on their relations also. Remembering her compassionate glance at Lanyon when they first entered the room, Julian suspected that she had outgrown whatever original sympathy brought them together, that she was less contented than he to "look on." There was a hint of tragedy in the idea of the warm, vivid woman restrained by the cold, indifferent man. Julian felt that, unconsciously, he had come near the cupboard containing their skeleton. In his interest in these people he had forgotten his sister's and Trevail's

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references to Lanyon ; but now it came in a flash that the reason for Michal's hostility and Trevail's reticence was precisely Audrey Thurston. The idea of an irregular establishment was displeasing to Julian not merely on moral grounds. He could not help feeling of Lanyon as we feel of the old or sickly, that they have no right to passions natural in ourselves ; that what is picturesque in us is indecent in them. Audrey Thurston began to appeal to him as the victim of a crank, for he felt sure that whatever relation existed between her and Lanyon was a matter of deliberate principle, and not an evasion of responsibility.

There was something painfully interesting in the situation, the evidence of an experiment that had failed. Julian saw that Lanyon's desperate satisfaction with his manner of life was not less significant than Audrey's odd, impulsive plunge into conversation with himself. Lanyon protested too much to be convincing ; he was as glad as she to talk to a stranger, but he would not admit that he needed distraction. He was like a hungry man too proud to accept bread.

As Julian rode away from Chy-an-dreath he was filled with a profound pity for the oddly assorted couple chained together in that moral vacuum. Now that he had made their acquaintance, the valley took on a sinister character as

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the scene of some drama, not the less terrible for being played out in silence. Two people could not live together for any length of time in that solitude except in love or hatred. Julian felt an irrational aversion from the idea of the former condition as between that man and that woman, while, as yet, they did not seem to hate each other. He was inclined to believe that he had come at a critical moment in their lives.

CHAPTER IV

IT struck Julian as a little curious that though Michal declined to know Miss Thurston, she did not abuse her. It was always Lanyon she held up for condemnation. Julian rather foolishly tried to persuade her that her prejudice against him was unreasonable ; he reminded her of the unconventional people she tolerated in London, and Michal, of course, was not soothed by having her inconsistencies pointed out. She was angry with herself for being afraid to give the true reason for her objection to her brother's acquaintance with Lanyon, and Julian's avoidance of Miss Thurston's name made her believe that her fear was justified. Julian argued that they had no right to judge people whose lives were without offence ; she retorted that he of all men ought not to countenance wrong principles.

Julian's mood, at the time, of dissatisfaction with the facile conclusions governing public and private conduct, inclined him to be interested in and indulgent towards people who had the courage to go their own way. Lanyon's careless allusion to the subjects which engaged his own earnest attention piqued his curiosity, and further acquaintance made it clear that Lanyon's reference

to his own work was not an idle boast. At some time in the past he had collected a surprising amount of information which Julian found peculiarly useful.

During his further visits to Chy-an-dreath Julian did not again see Audrey Thurston. He did not know that he was disappointed; indeed, he took some pains to assure himself that, since Michal would not make Miss Thurston's acquaintance in the ordinary neighbourly way, it was more convenient that his odd half hours with Lanyon should not be frittered away in the small social observances which the presence of a woman would have made necessary. Lanyon was obviously flattered by the importance Julian attached to his opinions; a real liking began to grow up between the two men, and Michal bitterly comprehended that the only result of her refusal to recognize her brother's new friends was to cut her off from his confidence.

Both she and Julian looked forward with more than ordinary impatience to the coming of Randal Tate. Julian was frankly perplexed by his sister's obstinacy, and put by various matters for philosophical discussion with Tate, who, being a poet, might be supposed to understand women.

How well Tate understood women in general, and Michal in particular, Julian did not know. It was characteristic of Michal's self-discipline,

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and of her confidence in the man who loved her, that his declaration, five years ago, had made no difference to their intimacy. At the time Michal had spoken to Tate plainly. The only obstacle to a definite engagement between them, she said, was her duty to her brother, but no amount of pleading would make her regard that obstacle as anything but insuperable. Michal paid her lover the extreme compliment of leaving him to take it for granted that she did not wish Julian to know that she denied him and herself for Julian's sake. Nor did she think it necessary to assure Tate that she would never marry any other man. Though Tate was too ardent to feel satisfied with this sentimental deadlock, the situation had its charm. Michal was worth waiting for, and no man and woman can feel more confidently sure of each other than they who recognize and respect the obstacle which divides them.

Randal Tate came down from London shabby and empty of pocket, but full of ideas as usual. Trelogan was always open house to him, but this time he had come with a special and practical purpose. Julian wished for a more considered expression of his ideas than was possible in the House of Commons or at public meetings. Half-sheepishly at first, he had discussed with Tate the plan of a journal, catholic in its views, but devoted to a higher conception of politics than

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could be claimed by any existing party, and, consequently, unlikely to reach a paying circulation. Tate responded enthusiastically to the idea, and it was decided that if such a journal came into being, he should be editor.

For the first hour of his visit, Tate was puzzled by the coolness between Julian and his sister, but the recurrence of Lanyon's name in Julian's conversation put his quick mind on the track of the occasion. He had observed symptoms of a development in Julian with which Michal was not likely to be in sympathy, and he knew the weakness of the man of affairs for prophets. He waited with anxiety, not unmixed with amusement, for confidences.

On the morning after his arrival at Trelogan, Tate was sitting in the library. But for his most expressive hazel eyes Tate would have been an ugly man. The lower part of his face protruded slightly, giving him a look of pugnacity, his coarse black hair grew low on his forehead, and his unusually long arms and legs and awkward attitudes reminded one of a large black grasshopper. But a person who looked into his eyes, burning with eagerness or softening with sympathy, noticed very little else. His expression and movements gave evidence of great vitality ; he was pale, but not with the pallor of the study or of ill health ; one felt that his blood circulated too

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quickly and too strongly to leave any stain on his cheeks. His hands were always warm and velvety, like the hands of a child. He had never been bored in his life, and his presence in a room invariably quickened ideas, and made people unconsciously move and speak a little more vigorously. A few people hated, but nobody disliked him, though he was candid to the point of rudeness.

Tate was doubled up in a chair reading with a frown of close attention when Michal entered the room. He neither saw nor heard her, but immediately sprang out of the chair and raised her hand to his lips. Michal's glance at him was almost maternal, though he was only three years younger than herself. It was easy to see that Tate would never grow any older than he was now; his contact with life was too positive. Perhaps it was his passionate youthfulness which appealed to Michal Julian.

There was no verbal greeting between them; indeed, they seldom wasted their intimate hours in words. They were content to sit together as tired people sit in a church.

Michal sat down in her usual attitude, upright, but not stiffly so. She had never leaned upon anything or anybody in her life. Tate, looking at her calm, proud face with still though passionate adoration, saw that she was depressed. It was characteristic of him that he seldom asked

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questions. People often remarked how much they told him about themselves without preliminaries. As he said, "I hate preliminaries."

"I shouldn't worry," he said now, coming beside Michal's chair and looking down at her. "You can't do anything, nor is there the least necessity to do anything. People must grow, and Godfrey is growing very quickly. Leave him alone ; it's kinder and more practical. When he's reached the right stage he'll tell you all about it."

Michal quite understood the meaning of Tate's rapid and disjointed utterances because she was so familiar with the context. Incoherence was Tate's way of flattering the people he liked.

"I know what you mean," said Michal ; "you're thinking of the hen whose supposed chickens took to the water."

"Well, it is a little like that, isn't it ?" admitted Tate. "By the way, who is the prophet ?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of prophets," said Michal, wearily ; "Godfrey has brains enough to take the prophets for what they are worth. It isn't the prophet, but the man, I distrust."

Tate's merciless clear-sightedness told him that since Michal was the first of the two to air a grievance, she, and not Julian, was probably to blame, though he wished it was the other way about.

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“Is he a scallywag ?” he asked.

“Well, I suppose one would call him a scallywag,” said Michal, guardedly.

Tate took a turn up and down the room.

“But don’t you see that Godfrey has reached a point where, if he is going to do anything, he must kick the respectabilities overboard ?” he said. “He’s got to know the publicans and sinners.”

Michal looked up quickly, as much as to say, “Now, how did you find that out ?” The thought did just cross her mind that Godfrey had complained to Tate, but she was immediately ashamed of it and of herself for being less reticent than her brother.

“Of course,” continued Tate, “it’s very comforting to think of Godfrey as a nice, tame little member of Parliament, beloved by his electors, petted by his leaders, and bound to get on. But for my part, I’d rather see him take the risks, even if he comes to grief.”

Michal saw that Godfrey had said nothing to Tate about their difference, and that Tate’s conception of her would not admit the possibility that she was governed by what he would certainly call a small personal prejudice.

“I suppose I’m only a jealous woman,” she said plaintively, finding some ease in confessing more than Tate would understand by her words. After all, since Tate was not a woman, he was

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sure to laugh at her misgiving supposing she told him. She felt very much like an experienced sailor asked to explain to a landsman why an apparently innocent relation of wind, tide, vessel, and rocks made him look anxious. There is nothing more convincing than foreknowledge, nothing more difficult to impart to another.

They were silent for a little while. Tate left Michal's side, and walked to the window and restlessly round the room. He, also, recognized the importance of beginnings.

"I'm very, very sorry," he said. "There is so much bitterness, so much unhappiness inevitable in life, that a trouble which is probably unreal maddens me. This must not go on ; it will be horrible if anything comes between you. You have some confidence in my wits ? "

Michal laughed.

"The utmost," she said, "because you are as wise as a new-born baby."

Tate knew what she meant.

"All right," he said, stopping short, with his hands behind his back. "I shall get Godfrey to take me over to see this prophet. I want to go this afternoon. I shan't say anything, I shall only look and listen. Then I shall tell you what I have seen and heard."

"Very well," said Michal, rising ; "you'll only tell me what I know already."

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Immediately after luncheon Tate said to Julian, as if with a sudden thought—

“Are you busy? No? Then take me over to Lanyon; I want to know him.”

Only then did Julian know that Lanyon had taken a second place in the association of Chy-andreath. He was glad that Tate had proposed the visit; he wanted him to meet Audrey Thurston, but Michal’s attitude made the situation a little difficult. They set off without further delay.

“Michal does not like Lanyon or I would have asked him here,” said Julian, as he shut the gate behind them. His tone was slightly apologetic, as if he wished to avoid an explanation which might seem to question his sister’s judgment. He was the last man in the world to ask if Michal had spoken of Lanyon, though he concluded that she had.

“But Michal does not know him, does she?” asked Tate.

“No; that is to say, she prefers not to know him,” said Julian; adding, “So far as I can judge, her dislike of him is on account of his domestic arrangements. He is unmarried, you know, and has a housekeeper.”

“Not an unusual arrangement,” suggested Tate, who was beginning to see daylight.

“No,” answered Julian; continuing with some

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feeling, "But his housekeeper happens to be a lady, which, for some absurd reason, seems to make all the difference."

They walked in silence along the open road over the cliffs. The silence and the space together were a little overpowering. Tate took off his cap.

"Of course it seems footling in the light of all this," he said, "and, intellectually, Michal would agree with us. But you must admit that it is just these irrational prejudices which—to use a cant phrase—make the English gentlewoman what she is."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Julian, wearily.

Tate did not force his obvious unwillingness to talk, but sympathetically analyzed his mood. He liked to have people under observation when they were suffering from growing pains, and Julian's first faint questionings of tradition were extremely interesting. There was a risk that in the reaction he would go too far. Julian, as Tate knew, thought slowly because of his minute conscientiousness. He would presently arrive at some conclusion from which nothing but the rudest practical demonstration would move him. He had the "way" of the heavy man. He would not act lightly, nor would he be attracted by the glamour of a thing; but when he was once moving it would be difficult to stop him,

and he would certainly leave traces of his movement. It was worth while to watch Julian getting under way, Tate thought. Julian's interest in Lanyon was not surprising to Tate, who took it as an illustration of the politician's instinct for making use of men. In some way, whether practically or for reference, Lanyon was to be made useful, and Tate's curiosity was pleasantly awakened. He stood somewhat in awe of the man of affairs, and though he set no great value on the end of ordinary political labours, the power to handle men made him feel somewhat frivolous and unnecessary.

"There is Chy-an-dreath," said Julian, presently, pointing with his stick. To himself the place had become extraordinarily significant; it was the centre of something.

"The sort of place where you might expect apparitions," said Tate.

The idea interested Julian.

"That's curious," he said. "I had the same feeling myself, only it didn't get translated into words. As a matter of fact," he added, with apparent irrelevance, "there is a buried church somewhere in this neighbourhood."

"Ah, buried things have a knack of coming to life again in unexpected fashions," said Tate. "Have you ever amused yourself by analyzing the reason why this sort of landscape suggests

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apparitions? You see, a vision is only the reaction of a sensitive temperament to impressive surroundings. In places like this the veil of accidents gets worn thin, and you come a little nearer to divine truth. In the case of a very devout peasant girl, the reaction is naturally expressed in the ideas with which she is most familiar. She naturally sees the Virgin. With a more complex temperament the meaning of the place would possibly work out in a simpler and saner vision of life—which is the same thing in a different form."

"You think so?" said Julian, speculatively. "That is the natural view of a poet, of course, but one can't help suspecting the sanity of conclusions arrived at so far from the subject. You are very far from life here."

"That's exactly my point," said Tate, triumphantly. "It is possible to be so hampered by the apparent facts of life that you can't see the wood for the trees. You need detachment, if not in space at least in mind, to get things into perspective. The rumour of events reaches here a little late, and consequently filtered of confusing accidents. Moses had to climb Pisgah to see the promised land, and 'Sartor Resartus' was written in the mountain solitudes. I'd rather trust my instincts than my opinions any day, and down here your instincts have room to grow. . . .

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I was talking to Foulkes, the scene-painter, the other day, and he said, ' You have to take it in large eyefuls.' Now, it strikes me that in these days of over-specialization, the man we want above all others is he who can take it in large eyefuls.

" 'There's Jerusalem, and Madagascar,
And North and South Amerikey,'"

he quoted, pointing across the bay.

They had rounded the headland, and were following the shore bending in to Chy-an-dreath. Julian was smiling to himself.

" You'd better talk to Lanyon," he said grimly.

" Now, I dare say over at Porthia the sea is like a mill-pond," said Tate, taking no notice of Julian's remark, " because of the interruption of the Island. Here we stand at the intersection of forces ; this is the pulse of the Atlantic, because it is the edge of it. Trevail told me once that he always knows when there has been a wreck 'round land' by the amount of stuff that gets thrown up here. When you want to know about a man's heart, you put one finger on his wrist."

They had entered the broad valley, and their vision of the sea was cut off by the great sand-hills, the records of both wind and tide, the immemorial excreta of the ocean. Tate found

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everywhere an illustration for his argument, and Julian was glad to let him run on.

“It’s the other side of Nowhere,” said Tate, “and everything comes here sooner or later. You get the meaning of the sea and the far-off echoes of the world reduced to harmony. . . . When you are in the Strand, you know, you hear only a great confused noise, but if you turn up a side street, you can pick out the individual parts—the pedal bass of the busses, the tenor of hansoms over the setts, the syncopated alto of passing feet, and the melody of human voices. You are immediately aware of an unusual noise, and a sudden cry is like a scratch on a mirror. Talking of mirrors, this is a place where you might expect to find the Lady of Shalott looking into hers, which would reflect not only the road to Camelot, but the whole world besides. . . . Oh, when I want to write my epic of humanity, I shall come down here. . . .”

CHAPTER V

WHEN Tate was introduced to Audrey Thurston he held her hand, embarrassingly for her, and peered into her face.

“Why,” he cried, “you’re the lanky girl who came to Morris’s Sunday Afternoons and talked to me about Tolstoy!” He turned abruptly to Lanyon. “Of course, I remember you, too, now,” he said; “it was your beard that put me off.”

Lanyon did not seem overjoyed by the resuscitation of old memories, and stiffly disclaimed all recollection of Tate. The latter moved impulsively to Audrey’s side.

“But you used to draw,” he said; “you showed me wonderful Blakeish things in pen and ink. You confided in me that you wanted to draw ideas, not things.”

Audrey had flushed happily at Tate’s calling up of old days, and she looked brimful of pleasant reminiscences, but Julian, who was watching her, saw the expression frozen out of her face by a cold glance from Lanyon. Her checked look was pitiful, though she answered Tate with a brave attempt at epigram.

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“Well,” she said, “perhaps that’s the reason why I never learned to draw after all.”

“Or did you succumb to Tolstoy?” asked Tate, mischievously.

Julian, whom Tate’s monopoly of Audrey left to Lanyon, saw him whiten and glance angrily at Tate. He pulled himself up, smiled sardonically, and gave a dexterous twist to the conversation, addressing Julian, but speaking in a clear voice which reached the others.

“Have you read Carnegie’s rectorial address?” he asked.

“No,” said Julian. “Anything striking in it?”

“Well, it ought to interest you,” said Lanyon, with his little ironical laugh. “He says that unless the nations of Europe combine they will be unable to contend successfully against America. As he puts it, ‘The separate nations of Europe can only look forward to revolving like so many Lilliputians round this giant Gulliver.’ More in sorrow than as a threat, you know.” He spoke in an easy, caustic tone, as if with the purpose of baiting Julian.

“Just enough truth in that to make it funny,” broke in Tate. “Americans can’t or won’t understand that the greatness of America is an entirely different thing from the greatness of England. It isn’t brag; they are quite sincere. I remember when I was sixteen I wrote to the Home

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Secretary saying that I was very sorry, and didn't bear him any ill-will, but I thought it only fair to warn him that I was an Anarchist ; and you remember Beauchamp's letter to the French army, don't you ? "

" But there is some danger from American enterprise, isn't there ? " asked Audrey.

" Yes ; but not that danger. The danger is inward, the growing tendency of short-sighted people to look upon American ideals as the real right thing for us ; to look up to American institutions and urge that we shall imitate them. Somebody made a joke the other day about German measles. Well, even German measles are not so dangerous to this country as American fever. America is useful to us as the collector of facts is useful to the man of insight. It is very necessary to discriminate between notions and ideas ; a boot machine is one thing, a social or political principle quite another. ' Yankee notions ' are quite valuable, but American ideas, for us, are already exploded. We lived through the present American stage a hundred years ago ; America is still in the eighteenth century, the ' age of reason.' They see salvation in material prosperity. Americans don't think, they calculate ; they are amazingly clever, but not very wise ; they have no statesmen, only politicians."

" I don't see the practical bearing of all that

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on the present relations between England and America," objected Lanyon.

"Oh, don't you?" said Tate. "Just at the moment when we want an enlightened opposition, the reforming party in this country has become infected with American fever. Well, saving your presence, Julian, the present Government is bad enough, but it is, at least, stumbling forward and not backward. The one thing to be avoided just now is provincialism, and the opposition, like the Americans, seems to be incurably provincial in its aims."

"What exactly do you mean by provincialism, Tate?" asked Julian.

"Mainly self-consciousness, which is always a sign of immaturity."

"Well, are the Americans so self-conscious?" said Lanyon.

"Yes," snapped Tate; "they are full of 'isms' and 'ites.'"

Lanyon coloured, and Julian looked warningly at the excited poet.

"As an example of self-consciousness," continued Tate, "take their behaviour over the war with Spain. That message of sympathy to Queen Christina was a profound piece of self-portraiture. And when the war was over—well, perhaps I can sum up their state of mind in a Dooleyism. 'Whin the bands had stopped playing "See the

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Conquering Hero," the grreat American Gineral stepped forward. " Lave up on that now," he says. " Boys, ivery wan of you would have done the same. I only done me duty," he says, " an' tell the rayporthers." All their big undertakings, when they are not frankly commercial, are spoiled by that fatal 'tell the rayporthers.' "

" I suppose," said Audrey, " that just as the Americans take themselves too seriously, we don't take ourselves seriously enough. It seems to me that while England must 'wake up,' it is highly important that she should wake up to herself and her own destiny, and not to some one else's. Mr. Carnegie, instead of saying 'the nations of Europe must combine,' ought to have said, 'the several parts of Britain must combine.' "

Tate darted an amused glance at Julian, who seemed not to notice Audrey's unconscious paraphrase of his *Imperial Review* article.

" You've hit it exactly," said Tate. " In spite of all the shouting, we have not waked up to our Imperial self-consciousness. We have talked of colonies for so long that we don't comprehend that they are no longer colonies, but integral parts of the Empire. Most of our efforts to improve departments are as if Mr. William Whiteley tried to run his establishment on the lines of an aggregation of village general shops. We want some one to point out that an empire needs a different

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kind of administration from that proper to a nation. This is at the bottom of most of the cackle about inefficiency. It is not the men, but their offices, which are inefficient. Even a fool may be efficient if his foolishness fits the office."

"I thought the war was going to wake us up to what you call our Imperial self-consciousness," said Lanyon, cynically.

"So it has, sentimentally," answered Tate; "but the parts of an empire don't hang together by sentiment, but by mutual obligation. We want the Government to take advantage of the sentiment by instituting broader schemes of legislation. Meanwhile from fifty thousand to seventy thousand persons emigrated last year from the United States into Canada."

"You've got America on the brain, Tate," said Julian, with a laugh. "Whatever truth there is in your argument, the Americans are friendly to us."

"On principle, yes; instinctively, no. They have blood-memories of the War of Independence, and of the way our sympathies went in their own civil war, because we understood ethnology better than they. It is said that a war between England and America is unthinkable. So it is—war with the sword. The Puritanism of the Americans is against their shedding Anglo-Saxon blood. Their shrinking from bloodshed is only another symptom

of that ineradicable vulgarity of mind which finds pathetically unconscious expression in anti-kissing leagues and individual Communion cups. Blood-shed is primitive, indecent. But if you want to test their public sentiments towards England, just look through the cartoons in the American comic papers published during the war. They were free from indecency, I grant you, but it would be difficult to argue their friendliness. I should be sorry to see America publicly attacked by any person of consequence in England, but I think that there is a real danger in the Americanization of English social and political methods. It is a case, if you like, of 'Save us from our friends.'

Julian was vexed by Tate's explosion, because he thought he detected the underlying motive. It was quite evident that Lanyon and Tate instinctively disliked each other, probably because, as Julian suspected, Lanyon's present mode of life, including his relation with Audrey Thurston, was an exposition of some "ite" or "ism." Indeed, Tate's reference to Audrey's having talked about Tolstoy during their earlier acquaintance was an illumination for which Julian was very grateful. He could not have been so pitiless as Michal, but he had been conscious of sneaking prejudices against a woman whose position needed explaining. In the reaction he had a quite unreasonable feeling that he had wronged her.

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He turned to Lanyon with the hope of soothing him.

“I gathered from what you said the other day that you had come to the conclusion that silence and inaction were a more effective protest against the existing social and political disorder than criticism?” he asked.

“Yes,” answered Lanyon; “as I said to you at our first meeting, I look on.”

“But if you were convinced that a certain number of people were seriously trying to find out a cure, you would not deny them your help?”

An ironic gleam came into Lanyon’s eyes, and Tate moved viciously in his chair.

“The beast fancies that Julian is canvassing him,” he thought. Audrey, who was sitting beside him, was watching Julian with quiet eagerness. With his last remark she turned anxiously to Lanyon, and Tate noticed that his ironic look was reflected on her face, but mixed with compassion.

“Well, I don’t know,” said Lanyon, importantly. “I am constitutionally a doubter, but I certainly should not scoff at any sincere attempt to improve the present muddle.”

Julian told him of his proposed experiment in journalism, which he believed might become a powerful influence for spreading the ideas they

both shared by giving a hearing to many thoughtful writers who dreaded the platform and distrusted the motives of party newspapers. Julian had the knack of making his hearers feel pleased with themselves. He advanced his own opinions diffidently, taking nothing for granted, patiently examining objections, and speaking always with deference, as if he hoped to receive rather than to give instruction. Lanyon was ready enough with criticism, and Tate saw that he was tremendously flattered by Julian's confidence. It was difficult to say whether he only stood out for pressing, or whether his vanity would be better pleased by his ultimate refusal to have anything to do with the scheme. Audrey joined in the discussion, and it was evident that while she wished Lanyon to be persuaded, she would not allow him to think that she was trying to influence him in Julian's favour. Tate perceived that Lanyon was a very jealous man, but whether merely intellectually or in a broader sense, it was not easy to decide. Tate was profoundly interested in the situation, and his mind began to run on possibilities. The reason for Michal's uneasiness was quite clear, and a sincere tribute to Audrey Thurston's personality.

By the time Julian and Tate took their leave, Lanyon had allowed them to understand that he was prepared to consider the possibility of

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contributing to the new journal. He definitely promised to help in the selection of a title.

“An interesting man,” said Julian, when they had left Chy-an-dreath behind them.

“Oh, he !” cried Tate, with a fine scorn. “A mere doctrinaire, ingenious in a narrow sort of way—a crank.”

“But you think that he’ll be useful to us ?”

“Yes,” said Tate, grudgingly. “At first I thought you were mistaken in asking him, but I must admit that he knows all the facts and figures, and in a crooked sort of way has worked out the consequences. He’ll do ; but I begin to understand the troubles of an editor.”

“You’ll have to use more tact than you did to-day, Tate,” said Julian, dryly.

“Well, the man made my gorge rise,” said Tate, impulsively. “Didn’t you see that he was patronizing you ? I can quite understand why Mr. Christopher Lanyon went into seclusion. I know the crowd he belonged to, and he probably quarrelled with them because he wasn’t allowed to run the show. Funny in a socialistic society, isn’t it ? I doubt if he ever had, or ever will have, a higher motive than the wish to cut a figure. However, as you say, the desire to shine needn’t prevent him from being useful to other people if he’s properly managed. I shouldn’t mind his thinking the world well lost for his

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sour little fads if he hadn't persuaded important people to sacrifice themselves to keep him company. You noticed that he doesn't smoke? I am ready to bet you any money that he's a teetotaller and a vegetarian, and—of course, you see the true inwardness of that *ménage*?"

Julian nodded. Tate thought it best to be frank at the risk of wounding him.

"My conception of the affair is that it's a crack-brained experiment in Platonism," he said; adding, "It seems almost a pity that Miss Thurston has outgrown the idea for which she wrecked her life."

"No, I don't agree with you," said Julian. "It is surely better that she should see her mistake, even if she has to suffer for it. But you think that she is no longer in sympathy with Lanyon?"

"I'm quite certain of it," said Tate, emphatically. "If she were not too generous she would hate him. As it is she only hates herself."

Julian quickened his pace, and did not speak for some minutes.

"If that's true," he said, "it's a very tragical story."

"It's the essence of tragedy," said Tate. "It is heightened by the probability that Lanyon's asceticism is only a form of megalomania, which quite conceivably may at some time show itself

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in an opposite direction. By the way," he added, with a laugh, "it was curious that I should make that remark about the Lady of Shalott. Miss Thurston is rather that type, you know, with her hawk-like stoop and watching eyes. Some day she'll see Lancelot riding down the road."

Julian seemed lost in abstraction. His slower and more methodical mind had only reached a stage of anger and pity.

"The difficulty is," he said presently, "that, so far as public opinion goes, the precise relation makes no difference."

"You mean Michal?" said Tate, bluntly. "Yes, I agree with you that her quarrel with Lanyon is—Miss Thurston. I have no wish to see her become tolerant of what she supposes. But, of course, it isn't so, and I believe that Michal has only to know Miss Thurston to understand that it isn't so. But how are you going to get Michal to meet her? If you only could, insight would soften her where argument would only stiffen her prejudices."

"I believe you understand Michal very well," said Julian, grimly.

"It's my trade to learn people, don't you know," answered Tate, laughing softly.

CHAPTER VI

IT was very seldom that Lanyon committed himself to any display of feeling, but after his visitors were gone his manner showed considerable irritation. He was in the uncomfortable state of a man who is not sure whether he has not damaged his pose for an insufficient reward. As the apostle of indifference, Lanyon had a certain distinction, as the silent person gets a cheap reputation for profundity. Achilles was not a modest man, but no doubt there were moments in which he comprehended that possibly he might not make the same figure in battle that he did in his tent.

Audrey took up a book and began to read, with the over-particularity of a person trying not to be aware of a disturbed moral atmosphere. She understood Lanyon's feelings, and saw the humour of the situation; but she had a serious purpose, which prevented her from comfortably indulging her amusement. Though she had a vivid picture of Lanyon as the donkey between two bundles of hay, she herself was not quite clear of the picture, but engaged unostentatiously in trying to make one bundle look a little bigger and more attractive than the other. A trifle would do, but Lanyon must not see her hand in

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it. Besides her interest in Julian, which as yet she scarcely recognized, there were other and more personal reasons why she wanted Lanyon to take the decisive step forward. For one thing, she was heartily sick of her aimless life at Chy-andreath; for another—and this was the more serious—she had lately had intimations of a development in Lanyon's attitude towards herself which positively alarmed her. This evening she felt that a struggle was going to begin, which for some years she had looked forward to with alternate hope and fear. Audrey Thurston was not a coward, but she had been through that struggle so often in imagination that she knew all the misery of it, and did not feel quite ready to begin. Consequently she reached the bottom of page after page of her book without taking in the sense of a single line that she read.

"New acquaintances are unsettling," said Lanyon at last, with a pleasant laugh.

Audrey laid down her book with a readiness that would have betrayed the hollowness of her reading to a less observant man than Lanyon.

"Mr. Tate is quite an old acquaintance," she said, "and I was rather surprised to hear you say that you didn't remember him."

To Lanyon her evasion was more significant than she intended. She merely wished to avoid a pointless argument.

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“My dear Audrey,” protested Lanyon, “you can’t expect me to remember every young man I have met in a casual way in the most casual society, unless there is something remarkable about him. Mr. Tate does not strike me as very important, but I am nearly being interested in Mr. Godfrey Julian. A mistake, of course.”

Audrey understood that whatever Lanyon thought of Julian, he was afraid of Tate. She could find nothing better to say to his last remark than—

“Why?”

“Because being interested implies a loss of mental equilibrium,” said Lanyon, his temper gaining nothing from the fact that he had to speak in generalities lest he should be too candid of his meaning.

“Surely the fact of your being interested is evidence that the subject is at least worth that much,” said Audrey, philosophically.

“I don’t pretend to be above the fallacies of human judgment,” said Lanyon, airily. “It is true that I am interested, but whether Mr. Julian is worth it remains to be proved. When I look back on my past experiences of men, I am bound to confess that the probability is that he is not. The only way to save yourself from the pain of lost illusions is to have none.”

“You said the other day that Mr. Julian

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is unlike any other politician you had ever met."

"His unlikeness does not prove his superiority."

"No; but if you remember, we agreed that he really is working for ideas, and not for small material interests, and that, broadly speaking, his ideas fit in with your conception of a sound policy."

"All that is very true," said Lanyon, judiciously, "but it remains to be seen whether Mr. Julian is competent. Personally I believe that if it were worth while to prompt and encourage him, he might do something. He is a good instrument rather than an instigator, though that, of course, is an advantage in a practical politician."

Lanyon's constant shifting of the point of argument made Audrey believe that he only wanted to disclaim the responsibility of making up his mind. She felt quite sure that he was jealous of Julian's powers and position, but she supposed that his jealousy ended there. She did not know that, with the clear-sightedness of a jealous man, he followed her interest in Julian beyond its apparent limits, and that, in the self-torturing spirit of his kind, he was trying to corroborate his fears. No lover waits more feverishly for his mistress's "I love you" than the jealous person for some definite sign that his

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suspicions are correct. In either case uncertainty is intolerable ; either victim is equally prone to precipitate his doom by speaking too soon. The crudest exhibition of jealousy is to belittle the object ; a cleverer, to overpraise ; but the cunningest of all is to make a parade of impartiality. Audrey herself only knew that Julian attracted her as the embodiment of a generous ideal.

“ Well,” she said, “ if you think that Mr. Julian is generally right in his views, and that he is a good instrument, his asking you to give him your intellectual support is a convenient opportunity, not only to supply him with those qualities in which you say he is lacking, but also to put in practice your own ideas of things in general, which you abandoned on account of a heedless generation.”

She did not intend to speak satirically, but she was rather tired of helping Lanyon to excuse himself for gratifying his ambition in a direction contrary to the theories he had preached for so long.

“ It is also an implicit criticism of my philosophy of life,” he said, eyeing her narrowly.

“ Your philosophy was based on circumstances which you yourself admit no longer exist,” she replied impatiently. “ You say that Mr. Julian is an opportunist ; that he is merely taking advantage of the fact that people are beginning to

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comprehend that you and the men who worked with you were right after all."

"The fact of the matter is, Audrey," said Lanyon, rising, "you yourself are in need of distraction. It would be very much simpler and more honest to say outright that we made a mistake. Speaking for yourself, that may be true, but there are cheaper ways of repairing it than persuading me to waste my time in helping on a movement which is bound to end in moonshine."

He left the room with a childish satisfaction in having shifted the responsibility of making up his mind on to her shoulders, and in having made an opportunity for expressing a definite grievance at the same time.

Audrey knew that Lanyon's reproach that she had made a mistake was unanswerable. How grievous that mistake had been was vividly brought to her mind by Tate's reference to the days before she had pawned her soul for an ideal which she now found empty and unsatisfying.

Audrey Thurston's parents died when she was a child of seven, and she was brought up by her father's sister, an ex-schoolmistress and one of the earliest champions of the higher education of women. Miss Thurston, deliberately kind and scientifically affectionate, spent a fair portion of her small means on giving Audrey a good start in life, which, according to the notions of those days,

meant the development of her brain at the expense of her body. She hoped to prepare the girl for carrying on her own objects under the more favourable conditions indicated by the decline in popular prejudice. In her anxiety to equip Audrey for teaching other people, she perhaps overlooked the importance of helping the girl to understand herself. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the good lady was competent for this latter task, being herself, in no essential particular, a woman. That her culture might be as wide as possible, Audrey, after attending courses at University College and passing innumerable examinations, took up—and the phrase is illuminating—art at South Kensington. Audrey was too specifically intellectual ever to become an artist, and though she worked conscientiously at her drawing, she naturally gravitated into the set, known in every big art school, which spends the luncheon half-hour in earnest discussion of almost every subject except that for the study of which one might suppose that particular institution was founded. These are the students who never miss a lecture, who come out first of examinations in perspective and anatomy, who read Ruskin late into the night, and dream at their easels during the day. You may know them by the sketches of “ideal heads” on the margins of their drawings from the antique. They know all about art, but don’t do it; they

hold high views of the mission of the artist, and, frequently, are Socialists.

From lectures on the Historical Development of Ornament, Audrey passed to lectures on Universal History given by the same professor on Saturday afternoons at the School of Mines in Jermyn Street. Here she met Christopher Lanyon. Their acquaintance beginning with the loan of a lead pencil quickly developed into an eager comparison of tastes in Russian literature.

Audrey was now nearly twenty, and, like many intellectually precocious girls, was backward in every other respect. Tate's description of her appearance at this time was sufficiently accurate ; she was a large-eyed, black-haired, lanky, and flat-chested girl, mentally and physically hungry, less a woman than an eager brain in an underfed and overgrown body.

Lanyon was about ten years older than herself, of mixed French and English parentage, a private coach by necessity, but for choice a speaker and writer of advanced views upon social and political subjects. An early disappointment in love reacting upon his egoistical temperament, had made him a misogynist ; that is to say, by carefully shunning female society, he had achieved a condemnatory theory of womankind, consistent because based upon and corroborated by profound

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ignorance of the sex. Though short of stature, he was distinguished in appearance—dark and pale, with keen eyes, and an expression and manners of extreme gravity.

Amid the austere surroundings of the most depressing place in London, a queer friendship sprang up between these two. Audrey, to whom intellect was the only thing that mattered, understood that Lanyon's tolerance of herself was a concession which she tried to deserve by crushing out every girlish instinct which persisted through her barren training. She joined the debating society to which he belonged; she attended meetings and read papers. Lanyon was invited home to tea on Sundays, and Miss Thurston complacently regarded the comradeship of the solemn young man as a fortunate influence upon the mental development of her niece.

Audrey and Lanyon were equally scornful of love, and often said so over the dreary show-cases in Jermyn Street. Their intimacy was a cold affair of marked passages in favourite authors, of common tasks and mutual renunciations. They spent much time and thought over the most misunderstood of modern writers, and that they misunderstood him more consistently than the general may be gathered from the fact that one day the egregious pair presented themselves before Miss Thurston, and announced that they

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had decided to live together as brother and sister for the rest of their lives.

Miss Thurston, who, like many other unworldly people, had never considered the logical extremity of her views, was horrified, and implored them at least to submit to a formal marriage. Lanyon, to do him justice, wavered, but Audrey scornfully rejected the proposal. She said that they must be bound by no ties but intellectual sympathy.

For a year or so Audrey and Lanyon lived in a fine moral glow caused by friction with public opinion and the hard struggle to keep themselves from starving. If they had been asked whether they were happy, they truthfully would have said "Yes," because martyrs for whatever cause are generally happy. Martyrdom, as Audrey found, is easier to bear than misunderstanding, which presently became her portion. Lanyon's friends welcomed her for something which she was not nor had the least intention of being, and she was claimed as a sister by women whose conversation and habits disgusted her.

About this time the incursion of practical persons into socialism rather spoiled the prestige of men like Lanyon. It was discovered that tangible results could be got without elaborate philosophical discussion ; that sound socialistic

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doctrines were being preached and practised by sober men who had wives and families, and went to church on Sunday ; in fact, that the picturesque properties of socialism were not only unnecessary, but a stumbling-block to progress. The socialistic lecturer declined before the labour member ; slapping respectability in the face was no longer a cardinal virtue. Lanyon soon found that if he wished to continue to take part in the campaign he must follow the lead of men who misused their "*h's*," but who really had some practical effect upon legislation for their working classes. Rather than be superseded, he renounced, and saved his face by exchanging the *rôle* of apostle for that of prophet of disaster.

Audrey's first disillusion was the discovery that Lanyon cared less for the cause of humanity than his own appearance. Whatever he did he must be picturesque, though it was some time before she even suspected that she herself was only a picturesque property of the part he played in his mind's eye. So long as they remained poor she was not critical of his motives in entering into a compact which, however foolish, was ideally fine and free from earthiness.

But when Lanyon came into a considerable reversion from a distant relative, Audrey's troubles began. She supposed that he would devote the money to the common welfare, but Lanyon

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argued that he had broken with his colleagues on matters of principle, and therefore could not consistently give financial aid to a movement of which he disapproved. He preferred to help on humanity by enlarging his knowledge of men and things.

With comfort and leisure Audrey began rapidly to develop as a woman. Her brain took on humanity as her limbs rounded, and she began to see that life meant something more than an exercise of the intellect. Her improved circumstances brought her into contact with pleasant people who, however, refused their friendship to a woman in her anomalous position. She was thrown back upon herself, wounded and ashamed. Obscure instincts awoke within her ; she envied the wives and mothers who called their children from her ; she even envied the women who were what she appeared to be. They at least had the solace of loving and being loved after a fashion. Audrey now knew that she was capable of loving, but that only made it more clear that she could not love Lanyon. All her instincts revolted from the idea of any relation between them but one of intellectual companionship, and that was not enough. Even that, too, was weakened by her closer knowledge of his essential smallness of soul.

For a time they travelled, but Audrey got

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little pleasure out of what should have been a happy experience. She could brave the censure of the world in poverty and with a definite purpose, but she could not face the insults and still more offensive sympathy which the circumstances of hotel life exposed her to. She disliked the idea of using Lanyon's name as he suggested, and their arrangement of rooms only attracted notice without making her respectable. The world which is a smooth place for the commonplace sinner is made very thorny for the idealist. Audrey grew nervous and kept her room, thus drawing down the cynical laughter of travelling companions upon the queer Englishman and his reluctant lady, until Lanyon, in despair, proposed that they should give up their tour.

They returned to England, and took a cottage in Lanyon's native county. Here they were left to themselves, and Lanyon, having nobody to astonish, settled down to his true hobby of books and the contemplation of his minor ailments; allowing Audrey to amuse herself as best she could so long as she was always ready to attend upon his fads and fancies. Gradually, as her imagination developed, Audrey made herself an inner life of her own—shy, subtle, and full of tender possibilities. She was too healthy to be unhappy, and her very loneliness helped her to

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a humorous perception of affairs in which she could take no part. She did not reason herself out of sympathy with Lanyon, but simply outgrew him ; and came to look upon him as a selfish old woman, uncertain of temper and very unpractical, but likeable, and, on the whole, amusing.

Whether from indolence, or because, as he protested, Lanyon considered the ordinary investment of money immoral, he had merely banked his capital ; and when it became apparent that it would not last for many years longer, he came out of his books, and somewhat irritably looked round for a possible occupation. The consequence was the move to Chy-an-dreath.

The change and the necessary activity had a curious effect upon Lanyon. After grumbling for a while he seemed to wake up again and to take an interest in his fellow-creatures. At the same time he recognized that Audrey Thurston had become a very different person from the wild-eyed girl who had plighted her sapless troth with him in the dismal halls of Jermyn Street. During the interval she had become a woman, a being entirely incomprehensible to him. His curiosity was excited, and curiosity is the mother of many things. He was haunted with the sense of lost opportunities. From treating her as a person of no consequence, he began to think it worth while to understand her point of view, and

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was piqued because, as if warned by some protective instinct, she always evaded him with watchful but laughing eyes. He studied her interests, bought her books and a piano, and in every way tried to win her confidence. The fatal thing was that she learned to laugh at him.

Of course, it was too late. Audrey had stored up her treasures, but not for Lanyon, nor for anybody else that she was aware of. She knew so little of men, that she never consciously considered what might happen if a man came into her life, but she could not help dreaming.

CHAPTER VII

JULIAN'S name first came into notoriety over the Government's proposed arrangement with the Cunard Company as a counterstroke to the Atlantic Shipping Combination. The question had been raised, considered, and was about to be settled as a commercial one, when Julian gave it a new turn by asking whether ministers had considered the practicability of the State not subsidizing but owning merchant and passenger vessels for communication between the several parts of the Empire. He knew that the general theory was that the State should not enter as a competitor into maritime or any other enterprise; but since the act of granting a subsidy put the State into the position of a competitor, though an ineffective one, would it not be as well if the Government went a step further, and frankly carried on business in its own name?

There was at first a vague feeling that Julian's speech was only a frivolous attempt to show his loss of confidence in the Government. At that time there was a group of younger men on the Conservative side of the House, perhaps unreasonably critical of the conduct of the Government in a series of difficulties, full of good

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intentions, but certainly without any very definite policy of their own. They seized upon Julian's idea with enthusiasm, and he suddenly became important to the public mind as the unofficial leader of a new party in politics. This was not exactly what Julian wanted ; he felt that the unexpected support was based upon a misconception of his motive, which was less to settle an immediate question than to prepare the way for the consideration of a new principle. Argument for the State control of industries was no new thing, but hitherto all such proposals had been considered on their merits as paying concerns. Julian believed that the future welfare of the Empire depended upon the deliberate setting aside of all considerations of immediate material profit to any individual part of it.

He was encouraged by the interest his speech aroused in the Colonies, especially in Canada. There was, of course, a protest from the ship-owners, and, judging by the vigour of their language, Julian could not but feel that, even on the narrow ground of expediency, his proposal was not so unpractical as people assumed it to be. He was too much in earnest to consider the effect of his actions upon individuals, but he looked forward with some anxiety to his next meeting with Sir Peter Lawrence.

If Julian had known how coolly Sir Peter

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looked upon the idea of friendship, he would have been spared a deal of heart-searching. Sir Peter's social creed was the new solemnity, which may be defined as the serious pursuit of the current form of idleness—whether ping-pong, bridge, Maeterlinck, Christian science, or efficiency. He had begun to cultivate Julian when it became the proper thing to do ; he would as unflinchingly drop him at the right moment but that his daughter had a will of her own. Now, by the rules of the new solemnity, if your daughter, or your wife, for the matter of that, insists upon a man's society, you can't drop him. All that belongs to the old solemnity, and any assertion of your natural rights, makes you the heavy father or husband of farce, and relegates you to the absurd sixties. Sir Peter had no intention of dropping Julian at present. He got a keen pleasure out of knowing the proper people, and all the circumstances pointed to a career for Julian. Still, this new fad of Julian's about shipping made Sir Peter feel that what might be called his æsthetic appreciation was at war with his material interests. It was difficult for him, as it always is for the man with no convictions beyond self-interest, to know what to do. If, as was not unlikely, Julian came to grief at the next general election, there was still the question of Amy's happiness to be considered.

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Sir Peter had strong hopes about his daughter's happiness, but, so far as he could see, Julian had now so far committed himself to an unpopular policy that his desirability as a son-in-law depended upon his success as Sir Peter's political and consequently commercial enemy. Julian's downfall would make him no longer of any importance as a political enemy, or, indeed, as a public person; but, under those circumstances, would he be worth cultivating as a private friend and possible husband for Amy? In the face of this complicated problem, Sir Peter wondered why the devil Julian did not consider his friends.

When they met, however, Sir Peter volunteered the statement that he took a disinterested view of the matter.

"Of course, we shall fight you for all we're worth," he said, with genial frankness, "but without malice—absolutely without malice. I was only wondering what your constituents will say when there happens to be another election."

He glanced slyly out of the corner of his eye at Julian, and then fell to studying his pink fingernails. Julian was glad that Sir Peter had spared him the awkwardness of the explanation he felt to be due, but Tate, who was present, made a mental note of Sir Peter's over-anxiety to disclaim ill-feeling. Tate did not like Sir Peter, and distrusted the sincerity of his friendliness to Julian.

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He would have preferred that the shipowner showed a little more heat over a subject which touched him so nearly. A generous view from Sir Peter Lawrence was a little too surprising to be wholesome.

Randal Tate saw the difficulties ahead of Julian as clearly as did Sir Peter. He saw that Julian's identity with a definite question sharpened the dangers to his career, since, though his aims were wide and far off, he would stand or fall as the State shipping man. Tate was completely in sympathy with Julian's ideas, but, perhaps because he knew so little of party politics, he wished that he could have avoided an immediately practical issue.

"Julian's too big for dirty politics," he said explosively to Michal a few days later. "He's too ready to take people on trust."

"I believe I've hinted something of the sort before," she said dryly.

"You mean Lanyon?" asked Tate, turning on her. "I'm not afraid of Lanyon; Godfrey understands him. Besides, it will be my business to manage Lanyon, and I'm a very cunning flatterer."

"I should have said that the fact of a person needing management was evidence against him," said Michal. "However, who is it, then, that Godfrey is taking on trust?"

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“Lawrence,” said Tate, bluntly.

Michal raised her eyebrows.

“Well, considering all the circumstances, I think that Sir Peter has come out remarkably well,” she said. “Sir Peter is a business man, and you can’t expect a business man to sit down calmly and listen to proposals for upsetting his affairs without raising any objection.”

“That’s just it,” said Tate. “I expected Sir Peter to kick, and he hasn’t kicked.”

“You must remember that he’s an old friend, and, I suppose, feels some delicacy.”

Tate made a gesture of dislike with his long hands.

“Delicacy? Lawrence? He’s a flabby thing that takes the shape of circumstances; but he’s very poisonous—like those jelly-fish that stick to you and sting.”

“I believe you’re entirely mistaken,” said Michal, coldly. “The fact of the matter is, you despise respectable people, and won’t allow them any natural affections.”

“Godfrey will never marry Amy Lawrence,” said Tate, going off at a tangent, “and it’s your affection for her that blinds you to Sir Peter’s little dodges. I’ve nothing to say against Amy Lawrence, but, on the other hand, in relation to Godfrey, I’ve nothing to say for her.”

“She’s a nice girl.”

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“Which condemns her. What does Godfrey want with nice girls? He’s done with nice people. Amy Lawrence would drag him down; she’s not woman enough, and never will be. I grant you there was a time when Godfrey seemed likely to lose his head over Amy, but he’s quite recovered. It seems a brutal thing to say of such a nice girl, but she appealed to his lower instincts; she’s like Milton’s definition of poetry—simple, sensuous, passionate. I tell you, Michal,” he continued, his voice softening, “in spite of all it would mean for us, I should be unspeakably sorry to see Godfrey marry Amy Lawrence or anybody like her. If you ever try to persuade him that it’s his duty to do so, you’ll be doing a very wicked thing. She’s a dear girl, sweet and lovable, so long as she remains in her proper environment; but, like all those soft creatures, she’ll shrivel, sour, and harden if she is transplanted into circumstances too big for her. Of course, it seems cruel, but it’s kinder in the end, and if I’m not very much mistaken, Amy recognizes that Godfrey is not for her.”

“Yes, I’m inclined to think that she does,” admitted Michal, “but that does not make it any the less cruel. She’ll break her heart.”

“There!” cried Tate, triumphantly, “you’ve put your finger on the weakness of your position. You want Godfrey to sacrifice the biggest future

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that's offered to any living man lest a little girl should break her heart. But, as a matter of fact, she won't: she'll cry a little, and marry somebody else. I know how you feel about it: you love Amy, and you've formed a comfortable conception of Godfrey as her husband, and now that he's upset all your calculations, you can't get reconciled to the idea."

Michal looked at him thoughtfully.

"Don't you think there's a possibility that you are overrating Godfrey?" she said.

"No," answered Tate, emphatically. "He's the real great man. See how the others—cleverer men than himself—have recognized and rallied round him. If Godfrey were clever, I should have my doubts; but he's so simple and single-hearted, that he'll go forward by sheer weight of conviction. All great men are a bit stupid, and that's where Godfrey's danger lies: he might fall a victim to a silly piece of soft-heartedness, or some small trickster might trip him up before he knew where he was. He needs the help of clever little people like me to keep a sharp look-out and clear the way of vermin."

Michal sighed. Tate's loyalty to her brother was very beautiful, but there were times when she wondered whether he was not blinded by his enthusiasm. She half admitted the truth of Tate's summing-up of Amy Lawrence, but she would

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have been less than a woman if she had not felt a little hurt by his scornful rejection of an idea which, whether practicable or not, implicitly left her free to marry him. It looked as if he were putting his friendship before his love ; she did not doubt his constancy, but she sighed. Perhaps it was her own long waiting that made her hug her little romance about Amy.

Tate began to talk about the new journal. It had been decided that the form should be that of a tract appearing at irregular intervals.

“Has Mr. Lanyon condescended to write for you ?” asked Michal, acidly.

Tate chuckled.

“Not yet,” he said ; “but we shall get him right enough. He really is useful, you know. Of course, you see how things have swung round. The philosophical Radicals fizzled out because they were ahead of their day. They hadn’t the sense to see that the things they condemned had to work themselves out to the bitter end before people would understand. The time is ripe now ; people are beginning to see the logical conclusion of political and commercial selfishness, and in their fright they are ready to listen to the older prophets—and Lanyon, pose as he may, is one of the prophets. I’m not pressing him yet. He and Miss Thurston are coming to town in a week or so, and I shall dangle proofs of *The Bell*

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before him. We want to keep men like Lanyon off the platform, where they might do harm, and give them their fling in *The Bell*. . . . By the way, you know that Miss Thurston gave us our title and designed the cover?"

"M'yes," said Michal, with a wry face. "Does Miss Thurston write to Godfrey?"

"No; why should she?" asked Tate, with a puzzled look. "Miss Thurston generally answers my letters to Lanyon. It's rather amusing to watch his manœuvres to avoid being thought over-anxious to take the bait. He wants Miss Thurston to make up his mind for him. . . . I say, Michal, you ought to see her; she's like the deep-eyed Liberty on a French penny."

"I don't like the type," said Michal, dryly.

"That's where you make the mistake," argued Tate. "She isn't a type at all; she's very sensitive, and as proud as Lucifer, but sorely in need of human sympathy. I doubt if she has a friend in the world, yet there isn't a trace of bitterness in her nature. I know the picture you've got in your mind: you imagine a short-haired, short-skirted creature with a voice like a newspaper-boy and the manners of a Yankee interviewer."

"Personally, I think the woman who wants sympathy is the more unpleasant of the two," said Michal. "However," she added, with a yawn,

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“I’m a little tired of hearing about Miss Thurston, if you don’t mind.”

Tate went away in a brown study. At first he had thought that he understood Michal’s attitude towards Audrey Thurston, but now he began to see that he had been mistaken. He suffered from a defect natural to his temperament. Because he saw things from what he recognized to be a preposterously romantic angle, he exaggerated the sober-sidedness of other people. Michal’s hint about the woman who wanted sympathy, however, set him thinking. He had never considered the sort of woman who would be likely to attract Julian except in the way Amy Lawrence had attracted him. Tate knew that Julian’s predilection for Amy had as little to do with Julian as Julian as his preference for pink roses. Evidently Michal believed that Audrey Thurston wanted to impose herself on Julian as the woman who understood him and was necessary to his development, and that Julian was in danger of regarding her as such. It was quite clear that Michal must be persuaded to meet Audrey Thurston, and learn with her own senses how foolishly unjust she had been.

Certainly there was nothing in Julian’s behaviour to indicate that Michal’s suspicions were correct. When he questioned Tate upon his correspondence with Lanyon, he never mentioned

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Audrey Thurston ; and if Tate purposely introduced her name into the conversation, Julian merely spoke of the inconvenience of Michal's dislike of Lanyon, which would prevent him coming to their house when he was in town.

"However," he said, "if Lanyon agrees to work for us, as I sincerely hope he will, all the arrangements will be in your hands ; and, fortunately, you are not so exclusive as Michal. I need only remind you that it doesn't do to make use of a man and snub him socially."

Julian, indeed, was too busy to concern himself with personal matters. There was a striking change in him which Tate was glad to notice. The support of the Socialistic and Labour sections in politics brought him into contact with men of every class, and he was quickly losing his coldness and stiffness of manner. He was more interested in human beings, less of a politician and more of a man ; and, as he found his abstract opinions warmly corroborated by the actual experience of practical men and women, he grew happier and more enthusiastic.

Certain features of his proposal to the Government, which he had foreseen but not enlarged upon, gained him friends in unexpected quarters. The immense advantage to emigration which a State shipping scheme would bring about was obvious, and presently people began to point out

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that Julian had hit upon a plan for providing a really efficient and Imperial naval reserve.

Mr. Astbury, President of the Board of Trade, himself a slow-moving man, averse from heroic legislation, was understood privately to lend an indulgent ear to Julian's opinions. Consequently, Julian's appointment as Under Secretary afflicted sensitive persons with a sinister significance. Just at a time, said the critics, when we were trying to establish the supremacy of business men in public affairs, the promotion of Mr. Godfrey Julian, although to a minor post, was a retrograde step. They did not deny his personal abilities; they believed his intentions to be excellent; he was a gentleman and a scholar; but the country wanted hustlers, not dreamers.

Some went further, and accused the authorities of unfairness in giving official countenance to heretical opinions. The *Apotheosis of the Crank*, they called it—an effective headline. Very knowing persons, however, said that Julian had been relegated to the post to keep him out of mischief. A supine administration did not want to be bothered with strong and uncomfortably energetic followers. Once inoculated with officialism, Mr. Julian would go to sleep like the rest.

Finally, the Government, without pledging itself to action, appointed a Commission to inquire into the advisability of the State undertaking the

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construction or purchase and maintenance of fast steamers between Imperial ports. Members of the Commission were selected from the Board of Trade, and the Admiralty; and the Canadian and Australian Parliaments were also invited to send representatives.

CHAPTER VIII

L ANYON laid down Tate's letter with a laugh.

"The enthusiasm of these young men is a little fatiguing," he said, "particularly since one has been through it one's self and learned the uselessness of trying to make the deaf hear and the blind see."

Audrey did not think it necessary to make any reply. She did not wish to argue or to seem to care very much; she thought it was a hopeful sign that Lanyon no longer questioned the soundness of Julian's principles or his personal power.

During the last fortnight, indeed, Lanyon had shown a promising disposition to be interested in the preparation of the new journal. He seemed quite pleased that Tate had accepted Audrey's choice of a title, and even went so far as to praise her design for the cover of *The Bell*. Audrey had been a little doubtful about the experiment of taking up the art from which Lanyon had dissuaded her during their first acquaintance. She herself discovered an unimaginable delight in the exercise of an almost forgotten power, but she did not know that it was the effect upon

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herself that Lanyon studied so intently. Had she known the thoughts that were passing through his mind as he stood silently behind her chair while she drew, she probably would have been more disturbed than by the ill-tempered opposition she had expected.

In the same spirit of investigation with which he had watched Audrey at work, Lanyon now handed her Tate's letter to read. Since their acquaintance with Julian and Tate, and with the pursuit of a definite occupation, Audrey had altered a great deal. There was a new vitality in her movements, a warmer light in her eyes; she was softer and more feminine. Now, as Lanyon watched the rise and fall of her breast, the come and go of colour into her cheeks, and the unconscious smile that played about the corners of her mouth and in her eyes, he experienced that first symptom of dramatic possibilities—admiration. When one person begins to admire another, it is admitted that perfect understanding is at an end. Lanyon had believed himself incapable of that disturbing emotion; he had grounded his life on the assumption that men and women could understand each other by the light of reason alone, and only now he began to suspect that the last word on human relationship was not a matter of reason at all.

Now and again Audrey looked up from her

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reading to ask a question, but she was living so completely in the atmosphere of the letter that she did not notice the unfamiliar look in Lanyon's eyes. He answered mechanically, but all the while he was greedily noting the things that he had hitherto disregarded—the depth of her eyes, the full curve of her mouth, melancholy even when she smiled, the whiteness of her throat, the shapeliness of her hand.

As he sat leaning his chin upon his hand, he could follow the letter with its quaint turns of expression, its naïve enthusiasm and biting irony, in the changing moods of her face. He thrilled strangely as the paper quivered before her breath. When she spoke, he dwelt on the sound of her voice rather than the meaning of what she said. It was a delight to listen to her voice; it would have been a delight to hear her talk nonsense, if only to hear that deep chuckle in her throat when she laughed. When she pushed back her hair, the action was most beautiful, and the play of her slim wrist as she turned over a page made him hope that she would do it again.

Why had he not noticed all these things before? Had they existed and he been blind, or were they only now called into being by some quickening of the spirit from outside? How little he had known when he ridiculed the reasons why men and women pawned their lives in the

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bond of marriage—the turn of a wrist, the curve of an eyelid, or the inflection of a voice.

He wanted to tell her how he appreciated her mouth, her eyes, her hair. He had often praised her judgment and perception, but now it seemed more important that he should say, "You are very beautiful." He wondered what she would say if he took her hand and said, "You are very beautiful." Would she be offended, or would she laugh? The thought sent the blood to his face in an agony of shame. He was beginning to understand what shame was. The tragedy of the man who was laughed at has never been written.

The glow in her cheeks, the fire in her eyes, were not lighted for him. He would be well contented to believe that she burned with the contagion of fine ideas. But he had given her fine ideas, and she had not looked so: she had only talked. Nor was she inspired by the writer of the letter; he, as unerringly as she, had read between the lines the name of another man.

Undoubtedly Lanyon had wasted his time in grasping the shadow for the substance, but perhaps it was not too late. Another might light the flame, but the lamp was his; he would make haste to cherish his possession which he had so neglected. With the perversity of jealousy, he felt almost glad that another man had quickened

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the cold woman into life, and at the same time opened his own eyes.

His mind went back to the foolish episode of his youth. He tried to remember what it was like to kiss a woman, and his cheeks flamed at the reminiscence. He had quarrelled with the girl who undoubtedly cared for him, because she had flirted with a man a head taller than himself, but mentally his inferior; he had dismissed her from his mind as a little animal. In his present mood he would have given worlds for a trace in Audrey of what he had condemned in the girl who loved him.

He suffered a sharp pang of regret when Audrey finished reading the letter, and as she looked up, his eyes dropped guiltily from hers. He felt as if he had surprised her unclad. As he reached out to take the paper, he allowed his hand to touch hers, and immediately began to tremble lest she had noticed. But she had not noticed, and when she spoke he saw that her face had taken on its usual slightly bored, slightly amused expression. A moment before she had been flushed and tremulously eager. He was as afflicted as if he had seen her in the arms of another man. What had he to do with Audrey as a woman? He had bargained for her companionship as a kindred mind, and he had got what he asked for.

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Lanyon was in a hideous dilemma. If he checked Audrey's enthusiasm and refused to have anything more to do with Julian's affairs, it was hardly likely that she would be drawn any nearer to himself in consequence. Not only his own vanity, but diplomacy indicated that if he wished to please her he must engage in those activities which interested her so keenly. But how far was she attracted by the movement, how far by the man? Jealousy is keener sighted than love, and from the first brightening of Audrey's face in Julian's presence, Lanyon had traced, step by step, the possibility that now seemed so likely to be true.

"You would really like me to work for Mr. Julian?" he said at last, in a muffled voice and without turning his head.

"I think that if you are true to yourself and the principles you professed when we first met, you will do what you can to help on the people with whom Mr. Julian happens to be associated," answered Audrey, in a clear tone and without a trace of embarrassment. "You surely must see that the reason for your silence no longer exists, but that, on the contrary, now is the time for every man who has anything to say to speak out plainly."

Lanyon eyed her keenly. Was she only acting, or was she indeed free from any personal

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motive? If she was acting, her allusion to the original bond of sympathy between them was an amazingly clever stroke. Was it possible, after all, that he was blind, and she was timidly trying to win the regard that he was so ready to give?

"Of course," he said, stammering slightly, "I don't know whether Julian comprehends that the principle of State responsibility once accepted and confirmed by practical experiment, all the other questions follow as a matter of course."

"I understood that was what Mr. Julian was driving at," she said. "In any case, whether he recognizes it or not, *The Bell* will bring the whole subject into discussion." She added, with a laugh, "From what I know of Mr. Tate, he is not likely to shirk the consequences of a principle, and I take it that Mr. Julian intends to give him a free hand. As I said before, I think this is your opportunity."

"Well," said Lanyon, rising, "I'll think it over. I need not say that my sympathies are with Julian; but whether I shall feel justified in coming out of my tent is a different matter."

When Lanyon had left the room, Audrey sat smiling to herself. Her emotions were very mixed, and she did not understand herself in the least. She honestly believed that her interest in Julian's work was abstract, and she did not yet perceive

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that her eagerness was likely to be interpreted differently by Lanyon and by other people. She was convinced that Lanyon really wanted to join in the battle, but that he shirked the necessary change of front, and she would have helped him to make up his mind if Julian had never existed. Of late she had felt that she was ready to encourage any hobby that would make Lanyon's life and her own less desultory.

She knew Lanyon's foibles very well, but she was not quite prepared for his colossal seriousness with regard to his own personality and powers. Try as she would, she could not shut out the ludicrous picture of progress waiting until Lanyon emerged from his tent. Her smile widened until she laughed aloud. She was startled by the sound of her own voice, and immediately found her eyes wet with tears. Audrey Thurston was not given to self-pity, but the sudden recognition of how long and how far she had lived from the natural springs of tears and laughter affected her poignantly. Nature has her moments of revenge ; bowing her face into her hands, Audrey cried quietly like any girl.

When she had recovered herself, Audrey began to wish that somebody could explain to Michal Julian the exact circumstances of her life with Lanyon. Until now she had not minded ; there was nobody in the world whose good opinion she

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sought; she even got a kind of proud pleasure from being misjudged. But now it seemed very important that Michal Julian should be made to understand; and, such was the fine conception Audrey had formed of her, she did not think that there would be much difficulty in persuading Michal that she need not shrink from her acquaintance, if only a proper champion came forward to do so.

Perhaps this is the strongest argument for the institution of marriage, that not even the most enlightened woman enters into a free contract with a clear perception of all the consequences to herself. When Audrey Thurston made her cold compact with Lanyon, she felt strong enough to bear all the contingencies arising out of the situation. They were going to prove to a gross-minded and cynical world that a platonic friendship between men and women was not only possible, but the most perfect human relationship. They had proved that it was possible, but Audrey began to feel that she had sacrificed more than she intended in the process.

When Lanyon and Audrey Thurston went up to London, Tate paid them an early visit at their hotel. He was boiling over with excitement, and shook aloft proofs of the first number of *The Bell*.

“We’re not going to make any promises or to

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explain ourselves," he said ; "people will wake up and find us there. We shall go for principles and principles only, whether in politics, life, or art. We shall try to live up to that saying of Novicow's, 'Déterminer la trajectoire d'une force naturelle et s'abandonner à son courant, c'est tout le progrès'—which, I take it, does not mean that one should go with the crowd, but try to find and to follow the eternal truths which the crowd eternally misunderstands. We shall not worry ourselves whether existing institutions are right or wrong in themselves, but concentrate our attention on the organic needs to which those institutions are applied. We shan't grind axes for individuals or parties, and this"—he turned earnestly to Lanyon—"is rather an important point. For example, since our desire is to supersede the existing conditions of labour, it is none of our business to meddle with any dispute between labour and capital in their present organization, because we hold that if you grant a principle you are a fool to grumble at the consequences. For the same reason we shan't support reforms in the army or the navy or the War Office, because it's no use tinkering up institutions which are essentially obsolete in their application. All these things will have to be reconstructed in relation to new conditions, and our business will be to try to understand and define what those new conditions are. Of course,

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we are reformers, but our ideas of reform are not deduced from blunders in the past, but in reference to the needs of the future."

He laughed, and flung himself into a chair, saying—

"We are not very big yet, but we shall grow."

Lanyon threw him a paper with the careless remark that he was welcome to make use of it if he cared to do so. Audrey knew that, in spite of his affected indifference, he thought he was doing a great thing. She tried to hint so much in a glance to Tate, who read through the paper with chuckling appreciation. Lanyon's article, which he entitled "The Alternatives," was an apparently serious proposal that England should restore South Africa, not to the Boers, but the natives, evacuate India and Egypt, suggest the annexation of Canada by the United States, sort out the inhabitants of the British Islands into their constituent races, investigate their priority of claim, and hand over the land to the representatives of its earliest possessors.

As an alternative, Lanyon suggested the responsible control of the Empire as an organic whole.

"Will you be our philosopher?" asked Tate, when he had finished reading. "We want a philosopher badly, and your habit of mind is naturally reflective."

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“You mean,” said Lanyon, with a self-conscious laugh, “that I’m out of touch with affairs—a bit fossilized, eh?”

Tate shook off his impatience with the man’s uneasy egoism.

“Of course you are,” he said bluntly; “but for my purpose that’s an advantage. I want somebody to survey things from the top of the mountain.”

“The mountain, the mountain,” repeated Lanyon, with a smile.

“Rather an effective pseudonym,” suggested Audrey, with an anxious glance at him.

“Well, I might do you an occasional paper from that point of view,” said Lanyon, stiffly.

“All right,” said Tate, rising.

He knew better than to make much of his victory. He unconsciously put his appreciation of the event into his handshake with Audrey Thurston as he took leave of her.

“Has Miss Julian been to see you?” he asked.

There was an awkward silence, and Audrey coloured violently. Tate saw the eager look in her eyes, and while he mentally kicked himself for the question, was not sorry to be certain that Audrey wanted to know Miss Julian. He thought he knew Michal well enough to risk more than the truth.

“Miss Julian told me that she was going to call on you,” he explained.

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“Audrey Thurston is in town,” he said to Michal the next time they met. “When are you going to see her? Oh, but you will, you will, dear,” he pleaded, seeing the tenderness die out of Michal’s eyes.

She released her hand.

“I would rather not, Randal,” she said.

“Yes, but for my sake,” he persisted. “She’s too proud to say so, but she’d be very grateful.”

“Why does Miss Thurston want to know me?” asked Michal, coldly.

Tate knew what had come into her mind. He thought the idea preposterous, but knew the folly of attacking delusions.

“Don’t you see that your holding off is a condemnation of her?” he said. “What makes it so cruel is that she can’t vindicate herself.”

“But I thought—this sort of person—prided herself on ignoring the opinion of conventional people.”

“Not yours; it isn’t only to me that you’re different from all the world.”

“But Miss Thurston has never seen me.”

“Yes, she has, in my eyes.”

Michal laughed sadly.

“Do you know, Randal, I don’t like you when you talk like that,” she said. “However, to change the question, why are you so anxious for me to know Miss Thurston?”

Michal was very willing to be just, but no more.

"Because your keeping your distance is an injustice to her, and consequently to yourself; it hurts my idea of you," said Tate, frankly; and Michal knew that he spoke the truth. "And another reason is that since Miss Thurston is in town, and Lanyon working for us, you are almost sure to meet them, or if you don't, the circumstances will be so pointed as to provoke comment. Not that Miss Thurston would mind people talking, but I shall, and Godfrey will."

"Godfrey will—why?" asked Michal, in as nearly shrewish a tone as was possible.

To Tate's slower brain her suspiciousness seemed a flaw in her, but the suggestion was not arguable without a reproof. He knitted his brows to think of a convincing answer without hurting her feelings.

"Well," he said, "it won't do Godfrey any good to get about that he associates with women his sister does not care to receive. I don't suppose Godfrey would worry about what people thought of him, but he would hate to feel that he compromised any woman, however indiscreet she had been in the past. To people who know you and your charity, your refusal to know Godfrey's acquaintances is a criticism of them, which you have no right to allow unless they are proved to deserve it."

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“Oh, you men!” said Michal, with a sigh. “Well, I suppose you won’t be satisfied until I go to see Miss Thurston. Please understand, Randal, that I’m doing this for you. You haven’t convinced me that it is my duty, and my recognition of Miss Thurston will be merely formal—as you say, to prevent gossip. I can’t pretend to make a friend of her. I’m afraid I shall always think the worse of myself for acting against my sense of right for the sake of making things comfortable. Don’t think me ungracious; of course, I shan’t explain my visit to other people, but I prefer that you should not think me better or more charitable than I am.”

“Thank you, Michal,” said Tate, fervently.

He knew what it had cost Michal to consent, and though he did not agree that there was any adequate reason for her unwillingness, his sympathies were too wide to allow him to think her scruples ridiculous. He knew that she was passionately sincere in all she said or did.

It was a curious commentary on Tate’s own tolerance that he jibbed from the idea of introducing Lanyon to Michal.

“But that’s eternally different,” he confided to the stars as he walked home to his lodgings. “Of course, if Julian likes——”

Choosing a day when he knew Lanyon was out, he took Michal to Audrey’s hotel. Michal,

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always a little better than her word, had proposed going alone; but Tate, while appreciating the generosity of her motive, had his own reasons for wishing to accompany her. The meeting of the two women interested him profoundly as a psychological study, and while he was triumphantly sure of Michal, he was a little anxious about Audrey. He hoped she would not see, or, if she saw, would not resent, the great pity in Michal's eyes.

Audrey's impulsiveness carried off any embarrassment she might have felt. She understood the situation better than Tate supposed. She had seen through Tate's prevarication, but was too intelligent and too just to cavil at Michal's prejudices, which, from her point of view, were reasonable enough. She was not effusive, but she tried to make Michal feel that, though they were instinctively enemies, and that the advantage of the moment was hers, she would not forget the magnanimity of a sincere opponent. Michal, for her part, behaved royally. She talked frankly of Julian's work as their neutral ground, and hinted an obligation to Lanyon, yet without suggesting that her recognition of Audrey was the payment for it. A lesser woman would have stranded on the subject of their near neighbourhood in Cornwall, but Michal somehow made it appear natural that they had not met before.

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Altogether, Tate witnessed a pretty piece of fencing and measurement.

When they left, Michal refused the cab that Tate was about to call for her.

"No, thank you; I want to walk quickly, please," she said.

After that she did not speak for a long while, and Tate, glancing round at her flushed face, saw that she had been crying. He touched her hand.

"You're a good sort," he muttered.

Michal made a ridiculous sound between a sob and a laugh.

"Oh, I can't understand it; I can't understand it!" she cried passionately.

"That's how I wanted you to feel," said Tate, dryly.

Lanyon was not overpleased when he heard of Miss Julian's visit.

"Really," he drawled, "we're getting quite respectable; or are we only useful?"

"Mr. Tate wanted me to meet Miss Julian," said Audrey, carelessly.

"Mr. Tate?" said Lanyon. "Another useful person. Well, I must say that Mr. Godfrey Julian has a surprisingly good notion of the management of the press."

Then, with the amazing acuteness of the jealous man, Lanyon feared that he had hinted too much. He was anxious to be at once

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conciliatory, and to feed his suspicions with more information.

“After all,” he said, with an air of tolerance, “I’m rather glad she called. You won’t feel so lonely at Chy-an-dreath now that you have made a friend of Miss Julian.”

“Chy-an-dreath is not London,” said Audrey, “and Miss Julian’s visit to me here was a tactful way of explaining that we never can be friends.”

CHAPTER IX

DURING the days that followed, Julian saw Lanyon pretty frequently. On the occasions when Audrey Thurston was present at their interviews, she and Julian had very little to say to each other, because anything in the nature of discussion seemed unnecessary between them. Julian felt that while other people understood his views when he explained them, she responded to the ultimate meanings of which he himself was only half-conscious. The casual word she spoke now and again crystallized his ideas, so that he acquired the habit of glancing up at her when the difficulty of expressing his precise meaning made him hesitate. Audrey had the essentially feminine talent for tidying up a man's thoughts and putting them in a good light. This feminine co-operation was a new and pleasant experience to Julian, for Michal's sympathetic recoil from the serious women who occasionally bored her brother made her scrupulously refrain from any apparent interest in his work. Her own somewhat Oriental view of the place of women in a man's life made her feel that he did not want to be bothered. Nor did he, but every man likes appreciation,

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and nothing is so flattering to a man as the intuitive comprehension of an attractive woman. It implies that she has been thinking about him. It was a new experience, too, to be laughed at. Audrey had a light touch on big subjects ; she was so sure of Julian being right that she could see the humorous side of his occasional dulness, his hesitation in dealing with this person's susceptibilities, his patient consideration of that one's advice.

She acted as a kind of interpreter between him and Lanyon, who, in spite of his intelligence, was hampered by preconceived ideas, and missed the points where Julian's opinions diverged from his own. His glib "Yes, I know," was a distressing barrier to perfect understanding. When Lanyon argued, Audrey kept silence, and came in at the end with some luminous observation which summed up the whole matter, generally in Julian's favour.

The absence of embarrassment between these two, and Audrey's increasing cheerfulness, made Lanyon feel that his fears were unfounded. His own newly awakened passion prepared him to look for something furtive and clandestine in their manner ; and because he found nothing of the sort, he complacently encouraged Julian's visits as a compliment to himself.

Randal Tate, however, had his doubts. It was all very charming, of course, and he still laughed at Michal's conception of Audrey

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Thurston as an adventuress, but he began to wonder whether the casual observer would understand the situation so well as he thought he did. Julian was quite capable of taking care of himself, but he was apt to be loftily indifferent to his reputation.

So far as practical affairs were concerned this was a breathing time for Julian. His previous career as an obedient follower of his party, while it kept him undistinguished, saved him from the annoyance of personal criticism.

The first attack upon Julian as an individual came from an unexpected quarter. Mr. Trevail wrote to him mentioning that certain mining rights on the Trelogan estate, leased to prospectors a generation ago, and which had now lapsed, were being sought on behalf of persons whose names were not disclosed. At the same time he sent cuttings from local papers, mysteriously referring to the coming revival of mining in West Cornwall.

An important point in the history of Cornish tin-mining is that the decay of the mines was not due to unproductiveness, but to foreign competition. When tin began to be imported at a cheaper rate than it could be worked at home with existing appliances, one by one the Cornish mines stopped going because, owing to the short-sighted extravagance of the companies owning them, there was

no capital left to improve their methods. In some of the mines which produced both tin and copper, it had been found more immediately profitable to work the copper only, leaving the tin ore to be thrown out on the rubbish heaps. Thus West Cornwall presents the anomaly of a metalliferous country unexploited for purely artificial reasons. There is plenty of tin.

Almost immediately after Mr. Trevail's communication to Julian there appeared in *The Morning*, an important Liberal newspaper, the first of a series of articles on neglected home industries. In due course came the paper on Cornish tin-mines. Here, said the writer, was a striking example of the culpable neglect of land-owners to develop their resources for the benefit of the community. These things should be regarded as a responsibility and not as a possession. If the proprietor himself were unable to find the capital, he should be willing to sell his rights to those who could and would.

Julian's suspicions were aroused. At first he had thought the application for mining rights genuine, though mistaken, but the note of grievance was a little premature, so he wrote to Mr. Trevail directing him not to take any further steps in the matter for the present. Julian was unwilling to stand out against any sincere attempt to develop his property, and in order to be on

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the safe side, asked Mr. Trevail to canvass the opinion of experts actually engaged upon the mines still working in the neighbourhood of Tolcarne. They unanimously agreed that the proposal to resuscitate the mines which had "gone in" was impracticable, and a little further investigation brought to light the interesting fact that the special correspondent of *The Morning* had misquoted one of these men in support of his own contention.

That decided Julian, and he firmly declined to consider any applications for mining concessions. As he had expected, this was the signal for a flood of criticism in the local opposition newspapers. The subject travelled from the provinces to the metropolis, and London dailies asked whether members of Parliament who were also property owners would not be better employed in furthering the material interests of their supporters, some of whom were also their tenants, than in wasting their energies on Utopian schemes for the regeneration of the Empire. Charity, they said, begins at home.

After consultation with disinterested persons, Julian came to the conclusion that "The New Century Mining Company," as the anonymous promoters of the enterprise termed themselves, was an ingenious weapon to damage him personally. If he showed himself ready to make the

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concession demanded, he was, for the sake of profit, giving countenance to that very principle his shipping proposal implicitly condemned. If he stood out, he was—at least, in theory—opposing the welfare of his constituents. All his attempts to discover the *personnel* of the New Century Company merely elicited the vague information that it was an American syndicate.

The result of Julian's attitude was what was probably intended. He began to receive letters from his constituents asking for an explanation. Julian's weakness as a politician came out in his persistent refusal to explain himself. He had his reasons, he said, and for the rest preferred to be taken on trust. Consequently, there were meetings and votes of censure, and Sir Peter Lawrence's remark about the behaviour of Julian's erstwhile supporters at the next election seemed likely to be justified. They would be prepared to vote upon a more local, and consequently more burning, question than his general policy.

Sir Peter himself was mightily concerned over Julian's mistaken position.

“Seriously, Julian,” he said, “do you think you are well advised in refusing to listen to the New Century people? Of course, I see your point, but don’t you think that it’s a case for diplomacy—doing evil that good may come, so to speak? It stands to reason that you can’t carry

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out your big plans if you cease to be a member of Parliament."

Julian smiled, and said that he had quite made up his mind.

" 'Said the pieman to Simple Simon, show me first your penny,'" quoted Tate.

"But they named their terms, didn't they?" asked Sir Peter, innocently.

"Who?" snapped Tate, eyeing him narrowly.

"Why, the promoters, the New Century Company."

Amy, from her corner, was puzzling over her father's manner. She, like Tate, was struck by his unwonted disregard of the first principles of business according to his creed, and she wondered why he was so anxious to help Julian out of a difficulty which was, theoretically, at least, advantageous to himself.

"Oh, the whole thing's a plant," said Tate, carelessly; "there are no promoters, only conspirators. We've traced everything except names, and we shall have those presently. We only hit once in *The Bell*."

"That's rather a serious accusation until you are in possession of all the facts," said Sir Peter, in a shocked voice. "Do you mean to say that the New Century is a bogus concern? Conspirators is strong language. It strikes me," he

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said, with a laugh of genial protest, "that *The Bell* will find itself in court for libel if its editor isn't a little more careful."

Tate intimated that he should welcome any action which would cause the New Century ghosts to declare themselves.

"Well, well, it's a pity you can't arrive at some compromise," said Sir Peter; "I'm afraid they'll make it a test question. By the way," he said, turning again to Tate, "I must congratulate you on your first number. But, I say, you villain, what do you mean by taking innocent people in with a paper like 'The Alternatives'? I confess I was fairly trapped."

Tate threw back his head with a boyish gesture and laughed.

"Mine and counter-mine, that's our method," he said.

Sir Peter glanced at him sharply. Tate had an uncomfortable knack of apparently shooting in the dark. The heavy man pulled down his waist-coat with both hands.

"Who's the lady who designed your cover, Tate?" he asked, in the tone of one collecting general information.

"Picture card No. 2," thought Tate.

Amy gave a little jump, and felt her cheeks and ears burning. Tate looked at Sir Peter with a malicious gleam of his brown eyes showing

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through his half-closed lids. He knew now that people were beginning to gossip, and concluded that it was better to state facts.

“Miss Audrey Thurston,” he said.

Julian, who was at the other end of the room, turned his head at the sound of Audrey’s name. Michal frowned and bit her lip. Sir Peter glanced from one to the other with an affectation of surprise.

“Rather notorious, isn’t she?” he said, in a voice which implied that he didn’t want Julian to hear.

Tate flicked his eyelids, and his under jaw protruded pugnaciously.

“She might be famous if she could be persuaded to turn out more drawings like the cover of *The Bell*,” he said, and turned on his heel.

“No, but,” said Sir Peter, fussily, and detaining Tate by the arm, “you misunderstand me. Quite agree with you about her powers as an artist, but isn’t there, wasn’t there—this man Lanyon, you know? I’ll tell you afterwards,” he said, with a sagacious nod and a significant frown towards Amy.

“Miss Thurston is a friend of mine,” said Michal, with her chin ever so little raised.

“Oh, I beg your pardon, I’m sure,” said Sir Peter, with a gallant bow and an air of disapproval all in the same action. His manner implied that

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in the presence of ladies there was nothing further to be said.

“Father,” asked Amy, when they were driving home, “who is Audrey Thurston?”

“Well, you see,” said Sir Peter, “it’s a little difficult to explain. However, she isn’t the sort of person I should like you to meet.”

“Isn’t she a lady?” asked Amy, thinking of the most likely reason for her father’s prohibition.

“Oh yes, I believe she’s a lady; but”—he pulled up the window with a bang, as if to qualify his meaning for the young by drowning his words—“she’s a lady with a past, don’t you know.”

“Michal Julian said she was a friend of hers,” persisted Amy.

“Ah, yes, so she did,” admitted Sir Peter, as if with an effort of memory. “But political women have to associate with people who are not quite—”

The necessity did not seem obvious since Michal was not a political woman, but Amy said no more at the time. She was not brilliant, but she was very shrewd, and the little scene at the Julians had set her mind working uncomfortably. Julian’s glance round pierced her with a very human jealousy, and her father’s reception of Michal’s remark that Miss Thurston was her friend, convinced her that he believed she had something unpleasant to hide. Amy felt a little

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sore with Michal for not having mentioned Miss Thurston to her. She had heard Tate speak enthusiastically about her, and she was glad that she had never liked Tate. He was always "nice" to her, but she could not help associating him with the Salvation Army and foreigners.

Amy's gentle sorrow that Julian did not respond to her affection was now deepened by the fear that he would prove unworthy of it. This being a half cure hurt her. She was prepared to relinquish him to a career which she recognized that she was not fitted to share, but she rebelled against handing him over to another woman. All this air of mystery exaggerated her idea of Audrey Thurston. Her father's obscure references increased her alarm ; she thought of Audrey as Julian's evil star. She had read of such creatures, and, without a very clear conception of their methods or motives, believed that these were beautiful women embittered by some wrong, who took a fiendish delight in leading good men to destruction.

One good result of this new sorrow was to take Amy's mind away from herself. She began to think of Julian in a new light, as the hero in danger, and wondered what she could do to save him from his enemies. It was only after several days, when her emotions were fused into greyness, that she remembered her father's curious interest

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in the New Century Company. She did not understand what all the fuss was about, but she gathered that Julian was having trouble with his electors. She recalled a remark she had overheard her father make to a friend.

“Well, if Julian won’t consider his constituents, he can’t expect his constituents to consider him.”

The remark ended in a chuckle more significant to her than his usual solemnity when talking politics. It suggested that he knew more about the matter than he cared to tell Julian. Amy’s conception of “business” derived from her father was that it was necessarily secretive and unfriendly. She determined to watch her father’s conduct with his business friends, a proceeding which his idea of the purely ornamental character of women would make comparatively easy. She remembered the fable of the mouse and the lion, and the thought that without any hope of reward she might be of use to Julian was a great consolation.

CHAPTER X

IN spite of Mr. Trevail's investigations at Trelogan, and Tate's excursion into underground journalism, the identity of the New Century Mining Company remained undiscovered. The fact that no prospectus was issued did not divert people's minds from the grievance that Mr. Godfrey Julian stood in the way of local interests. That was a fact easily grasped ; the explanations of his friends were not so obvious. Tate wisely kept out of the discussion, because, as he said, *The Bell* did not concern itself with the parish pump.

The Cornish mind is naturally conservative, and the ostensible advantages of the New Century Mining Company did not arouse much enthusiasm among the people who might be supposed to be interested. Julian's conduct, however, was a different matter ; and when it became a subject of tap-room gossip that the local member was a "g'eat mean man," Mr. Trevail wrote to him, urging that some definite steps should be taken to meet the denunciation. Julian recognized with impatience that, however necessary big aspirations were to the welfare of the Empire, the individual member of Parliament could not, in the present

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state of things, afford to ignore the parish pump. The trouble was singularly inopportune ; a ridiculous pin-prick when he could least spare the time to attend to it.

The Morning affected a tone more of sorrow than of anger. The great Liberal party was the real Simon Pure after all. They had believed that Mr. Godfrey Julian was sincere in his loudly advertised plans for encouraging British industries, but they regretted to observe that, when it came to personal conduct, he was lamentably inconsistent. To the mind unprejudiced by flatulent theories of sham Imperialism it was surely better to make use of the material at hand than to clamour for an ill-timed revolution in the system of oversea traffic. What was the good of the Government purchasing vessels to import — amongst other things tin — when there was tin in Cornwall, and a philanthropic body of men only hindered from working it for the benefit of labour by the greed or obstinacy of individuals ? They drew a beautiful picture of the palmy days of tin-mining ; they quoted ancient inhabitants with convincing local colour of “bal maidens,” “tut-work,” and “tribute men ;” they gave statistics of the number of Cornish miners who emigrated to Africa every year.

Loudest among the more friendly critics was Sir Peter Lawrence.

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“No one, my dear boy, wishes to put a spoke in the wheels of these damned Yankees more than I do,” he said; “but don’t you think it would be policy to concede this point? It’s merely a personal matter, don’t you know, and can’t affect the general principle.”

It fell out shortly after this speech that Sir Peter went to bed with gout. Owing to the peculiar nature of his more recent business transactions, a great deal of his correspondence was conducted from his own library. During his illness an important letter had to be written, and with something of a Bluebeard’s impressiveness he gave Amy a bunch of keys and instructions to search in his desk for a certain paper which he minutely described.

Amy determined to make the most of her opportunity, and, casting her eyes over the ordered pigeon-holes of her father’s desk, saw the name Mr. Godfrey Julian staring at her from lines of print. She drew out the bundle of papers neatly fastened with an elastic band, slipped them loose, sat down and began to read. For a moment the familiarity of the words puzzled her until she recognized an article from a financial journal which her father had read aloud in her hearing only a week before. She remembered his well-assumed regret when he called his listener’s attention to the article. Yet

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here at the head of the long slip, which she knew was a printer's proof, were the words, "Strictly private and confidential." Amy was a dutiful daughter, but at that moment all her ideas of right and wrong were centred round Godfrey Julian. She did not worry about any possible consequences to her father; she only thought of him with shame and anger. Relentlessly she read through the other papers in the bundle. Their purport she did not clearly understand, but she grasped the fact that Tate had truly spoken of the New Century Mining Company as a conspiracy, and that her father was the arch-conspirator.

Amy slipped the papers into her pocket and went upstairs. During the rest of her interview with her father she was so absent-minded that he indulgently released her from further attendance, apologizing for having troubled her with dry business matters.

Amy Lawrence lacked the essential qualities of a successful criminal; she was afraid to act on her own initiative. She concluded that the papers would be useful to Julian, but did not quite know how to let him have them; she did not trust the post, and she shrank from the idea of taking them to him in person. Michal had called that morning on her way out of town for the afternoon, Tate was difficult to find, and

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whatever Amy did she must act quickly. Then she thought of Audrey Thurston, and the curiosity she felt about her weighed strongly in her decision to take the papers to her. There was also a wild hope in her breast that the spectacle of her own humble devotion to Julian would move Audrey to remorse.

During her journey to Audrey's hotel, Amy was greatly exercised as to how she was to meet the strange woman. The picture she had formed of her in her own mind was terrifying—the gorgeous livery of sin, diamonds and the movements of melodrama. Should she offer her hand? Well, she supposed she might, but she would accept no hospitality, nor submit to be called "little woman."

The rather sad woman with the gentle voice and brooding eyes, the quiet grey dress and neatly braided hair, upset all her calculations. Her own voice and eyes were tearful with excitement as Audrey held her small hot hand, instinctively extended, in her soothing fingers. Audrey looked at her curiously, but put her at her ease by acting as if her unexpected visit was the most natural thing in the world. She wore no diamonds, and Amy's furtive glance round the room for a brandy bottle was unrewarded. There was very plain sewing on a table, and for the rest the apartment belonged apparently to an old

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maid of mildly literary tastes. In spite of her carefully rehearsed speeches, Amy was only able to say—

“Oh, I’ve brought you these,” and placed the papers in Audrey’s hand.

“But do you wish me to read them now?” asked Audrey, with a gleam of amusement in her grey eyes.

“Yes, please,” gasped Amy, with an emphatic nod.

Audrey sat down and looked through the papers, at first with bewilderment, then gravely, and finally with a gradual smile and flush of pleasure.

“Oh,” she said, with the deep, soft chuckle of a mischievous child, “but where did you get these?”

“From father’s desk,” said Amy, almost in a whisper. Now that she had confided in a second person, the enormity of her crime was coming home to her.

Audrey put the papers together and handed them back to her.

“Well,” she said, “what do you want me to do?”

“I thought you would be glad,” faltered Amy.

“I am—glad,” said Audrey, with a laugh. “But tell me—why didn’t you take the papers to Mr. Julian?”

Amy flushed, looked up and ruefully away.

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Audrey sighed, rose and walked over to the window.

"I can't do anything, you know," she said rather coldly over her shoulder.

"Can't Mr. Tate?"

"Mr. Tate? Oh yes, he could, of course. But don't you see," said Audrey, coming back to her chair, "if Mr. Tate publishes the information you have so cleverly obtained, it will be a great help to Mr. Julian, but it will be very"—she smiled—"inconvenient for your father. Have you thought of that?"

"It was so wicked," cried Amy, agitatedly. "I don't care what happens, if only you can stop people saying the horrid things they do about Mr. Julian."

Amy had intended to ask Audrey's mercy less frankly, but now she thought, "What's the use when she looks at me like that?" And indeed Audrey's kindly, humorous gaze took in a great deal more than the most searching cross-examination would have torn from Amy's breast.

"What do they say about him?" asked Audrey, gravely; but here Amy lost heart.

"Why, they say that he got into Parliament on false pretences," she meekly replied.

"It doesn't really matter what they say, does it?" said Audrey, with something of Julian's own manner.

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Amy grudgingly conceded that Audrey seemed to belong to a region above petty squabbling, whether political or otherwise.

"Oh, you are on his side, aren't you?" she cried, clasping her hands impulsively.

"Oh yes, I think he's splendid," said Audrey, with a laugh.

Then there was an awkward silence.

"And he thinks you are splendid," said Amy, a little plaintively.

It was Audrey's turn to flush, and her quick frown and catch at self-possession did not escape Amy's eager eyes.

"Mr. Julian likes my drawings, and I—it is a great pleasure to work for him and for Mr. Tate," said Audrey, gravely.

She felt rather embarrassed under Amy's hungry gaze. To tell the truth, Amy was trying to fix in her mind exactly the splendidness of the other woman, which she was quite willing to admit. Michal Julian was the most dignified woman she knew, but Audrey had a poise which seemed rather a finer thing. Amy could conceive circumstances in which Michal's serenity of class and tradition might be put out, but Audrey looked as if she had won her way to a more personal, more flexible dignity, which would enable her to be herself in any situation. But Amy did not know how much, in spite of her power, Audrey

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envied her. She was thinking how good it must be not to need explaining, to wear your antecedents, as Amy did her pretty frock, with the unconsciousness of being perfectly correct. It is not only in books that footnotes are a nuisance. As if overpowered by Audrey's sombre eyes, Amy said artlessly—

“I wish I was clever.”

Audrey smiled.

“I should say,” she said, looking at the papers on Amy's lap, “that you are very clever.”

“Oh, that!” said Amy, giving the papers a little contemptuous flick. “Anybody can steal. But here—I want to leave them with you.”

“Do you know, I think you ought to give them to Mr. Julian yourself,” said Audrey, unconsciously putting her hands behind her back.

“Oh, do you think so?” said Amy; and her bright eyes and parted lips showed how the idea pleased her.

“Yes, I think so,” said Audrey, seriously. She saw exactly how Amy's courage failed. “It will be a sort of reparation for the family, which Mr. Julian will appreciate. . . . Don't think too hardly of your father; everything is fair in—in politics.”

“But he pretended to be his friend!” said Amy, disgustedly.

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Audrey looked at her in a rather absent-minded way.

"Mr. Julian and Sir Peter are great friends?" she inquired.

"Oh yes; we have known Mr. Julian for years," answered Amy.

That was her one little triumph, but as she spoke the words she recognized that from an outsider's point of view they summed up her claim to sympathy.

"That settles it, then," said Audrey, briskly. "I am only a new acquaintance. Put them in your pocket, dear," she continued, as quick footsteps were heard on the stairs. "I believe here is Mr. Tate."

But here Amy showed where she was wanting.

"Tell him, tell him!" she whispered excitedly.

Tate looked rather surprised to see Amy in that place, but greeted her cheerfully. Amy noticed with chagrin the comradeship between him and Audrey. She felt very young and crude, and was glad, now, that she hadn't said the silly things she had intended. Audrey seemed to have justified herself somehow as a person not bound by ordinary rules—"as one would excuse a foreign princess," in Amy's way of putting it.

"Miss Lawrence is the goddess out of the machine," said Audrey, in answer to the little

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furtive shove which Amy gave her with the bundle of papers. "Here is the key to the New Century Mining Company."

Tate seized the papers, and after glancing at them, gave a yelp of delight.

"Bless you, bless you!" he cried, turning to Amy. "But where on earth did you find these?"

Amy falteringly told him of her discovery. Audrey and Tate exchanged sympathetic glances. Amy was frightened now, and felt that she had allowed her advantage to slip through her fingers. Julian would never know what she had done for him; she wished she could have been a little braver.

"But Sir Peter will gobble you up!" said Tate, in a voice of assumed terror.

"I don't care," said Amy, stoutly.

"Well, you are a heroine, you know," said Tate, "but we shan't allow you to be sacrificed. Will you excuse me while I make a few notes?"

He sat down to the table, pushed Audrey's sewing on one side, and went rapidly through the papers, scribbling the while.

"Just what we wanted," he said, punctuating his words with a dotting pencil. "There's enough evidence here to discredit *The Market* for ever. . . . Oh, don't be afraid. . . . I've got a plan—a ripping plan. . . . Now, run home quick—quick, and put these papers where you found

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them." He jumped up and thrust the papers into her hand.

"Don't say a word to your father; his name shan't come out, and nobody but Mr. Julian will know how you helped him."

Amy found herself obeying Tate's directions as if she were a little child. It seemed quite natural that when Audrey bid her "good-bye," after a moment's hesitation and asking permission with her eyes, she stooped and kissed her on the cheek.

When Amy was gone, Tate rapidly unfolded his plan to Audrey.

"We shan't treat this as a conspiracy against Julian, but as a plot to rig the market; we'll rouse the Tolcarne people—don't you see that if the preposterous thing had come off, it would have affected their shares? I shall take my notes round to the office of *The Mining Record*, and they'll go for *The Market* bald-headed. And I shall also whisper a word or two in the ear of the editor of that rag. To save his skin he'll probably disgorge everything."

But Audrey did not seem profoundly interested in Tate's plan of campaign; she was thinking about Amy Lawrence.

CHAPTER XI

THE collapse of the New Century Mining Company was complete and dramatic. Both *The Market* and *The Morning* posed as innocent victims of the wiles of company promoters. They did their best, they said, to maintain a high standard of journalistic purity, but they did not pretend that their young men were more than human. There would be a searching investigation, and possibly actions at law. Meanwhile, they congratulated the public on the discretion and impartiality of the press. In spite of the solicitations of the New Century Mining Company, which, they hinted, were eminently worth while, they had maintained a purely academic attitude all through the discussion, and they had refused, at a loss, to publish any statement which might have tempted the incautious investor to put his hand into his pocket.

Neither Sir Peter Lawrence's name nor his share in the cost of the "investigation"—the actions at law were found to be unnecessary—were made public, and he was one of the first to congratulate Julian upon the collapse of what he now termed "the dastardly conspiracy" against him.

Julian's vindication coincided with the Report of the Commission on State Shipping, advising the Government immediately to consider the question of Imperial ownership of merchant and passenger vessels as an alternative to subsidizing particular private lines. Among the advantages pointed out were reorganization of the Naval Reserve, stimulus to emigration, and the automatic settlement of tariff questions.

Until now nobody had quite believed that Julian's proposal would be taken seriously by any body of persons outside the gang of irresponsible young men who had followed his banner in the House of Commons. There had been, it is true, a hazy notion that a Commission was doing something, and that the Colonies were interested; but then it was allowed that the Government had to appear to do something in payment for colonial loyalty during the war, and to put off the consideration of preferential tariffs within the Empire.

Before people had recovered from their surprise at the tone of the report, Mr. Astbury, that silent and docile man, gave notice of a Bill embodying its recommendations. Even his bitterest opponents refused to believe him guilty: Astbury, they said, held the gun, but Julian supplied the powder and shot; and newspapers which had protested against the Under Secretary's

appointment now reminded their readers of their perspicacity.

The members of a disunited Opposition wasted so much energy in abusing the Government and each other, that Mr. Astbury's Bill emerged from a first reading without serious encounter. Then the storm broke round Julian. Hitherto he had devoted himself, whether in his journal or at public meetings, to the comparatively easy task of making people familiar with his general principles in politics. He had made friends and enemies, but the subject was too large for rancour. Now that his principles narrowed down to a particular and apparently practical issue, public feeling, whether of enthusiasm or anger, became more intense.

Julian's position had its charm and its dangers. One is apt to regard statesmen as parts of a machine with characteristic features merely for the convenience of comic draughtsmen. But in spite of universal suffrage, the large and apparently mechanical workings of the British Constitution in any particular direction depend in the last resort upon the personal character of a single man. No system entirely crushes out human nature, and at the back of every movement is finally the subconsciousness of a single individual, and the things that affect that subconsciousness. So, at the moment in which Julian was concentrating his supporters upon a definite question

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of practical policy, he found matters complicated by the intrusion of a factor he had not accounted for—himself.

A few days before Julian's journey to Liverpool to address a big meeting of persons interested in shipping, he paid a flying visit to the office of *The Bell*. That journal, begun frankly as a tract, had, after the second number, justified its existence by reaching a paying circulation as a weekly paper. From begging contributions of his friends, Tate found himself embarrassed by the amount of material he had to deal with. People who had laughed at the conduct of a political journal by a poet, learned that when poets can be persuaded to touch everyday affairs, they are desperately practical, because theirs is the higher common sense of the child. A subeditor had become necessary, and Tate offered the post to Lanyon, who, however, would not accept it, though he remained a regular contributor. The editorial room at Tate's chambers was no longer adequate, and *The Bell* was now housed in offices in Bouvierie Street.

Tate was out when Julian called, but he found Audrey Thurston in his private office correcting the proofs of a belated article of Lanyon's, which had to go to press that evening. She sprang up on Julian's entrance with an involuntary gladness in her eyes which left them both slightly

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embarrassed. Though they had met, they had not regarded each other as personalities since Julian's visit with Tate to Chy-an-dreath. The familiarity in the mind of each of the idea of the other made them both surprised at the change in their appearances. It was as if scales had fallen from their eyes and they saw each other for the first time. They had to reconcile a theoretical conception with a reality which passed beyond it. She, though thinner, was more vivid, as beffited one who had ceased to look out of window and joined the procession, and, to Julian's eyes, she had strikingly the appearance of one who had thought and felt herself into her attractive bodily shape. Julian was at first sight shockingly older. His mouth was grimmer, his eyes more deeply set, his hair noticeably grizzled at the temples. The decision of his entrance collapsed into a self-conscious hesitation, as if he had been caught thinking aloud. His first words were an awkward attempt to utter a conventional expression of gratitude.

As he held her hand he thanked her, and through her Lanyon, for their loyal co-operation. But immediately afterwards he recognized that, so far as she was concerned, his gratitude was not for work or any conscious action whatever. It was precisely for herself as God made her that Julian was thankful. And he knew it now. Yet it was difficult to say so much to a very living

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woman after the manner of one writing down the titles of "books that have helped me." There was only one way in which it could be said, and that, from her circumstances, was impossible.

It is said that women do everything with one eye on a particular man. Perhaps their distinction is that they know it. The ironic gods, like Napoleon, get their work done by properly considering their instruments—and victims.

"You needn't thank me for giving me work to do," said Audrey, with a laugh; "it was a temptation, and I succumbed."

It came into both their minds that this was the very first time they had seen each other alone, and that the occasion asked for some interchange of confidences, their intimacy being a cosmic accident, and not to be measured by weeks or opportunity. Still, neither knew how to begin, which, as they both understood, was a fault of civilization. Because he could not say the thing that mattered, and silence being nearly as difficult, since it had the same meaning, Julian fatuously picked up and worried her last remark.

"You were not idle before," he said.

"No," she answered; "but I chose my own tasks, and my own way of doing them, which is never quite satisfactory either to the task or the doer."

"I wonder," said Julian, thoughtfully.

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“Oh, I’m quite sure of it,” she said cheerfully, though her voice trembled a little. “The discovery was humiliating at first, but the satisfaction of having something definite to do quite made up for that. I don’t want to be my own taskmistress again.”

Her tone and manner implied that she had to work out her own expiation for past blunders, while Julian was burning to assert that all along she had reserved all of herself that mattered to him. He wanted in some delicate way to show her that he understood all that she could not tell him—her mistaken experiment with Lanyon, and the disastrous consequences to herself. He wanted to tell her that she had no reason to regret the past, or grieve over the perplexities of her position ; that in the eyes of all people worth troubling about she was triumphantly absolved from whatever disrepute clung to the idea of her in inferior minds ; in short, that for them everything would come right in the end. Yet how to do this without being priggish or impertinent baffled him, and he wisely kept silence, in which it was understood. The only rational and proper sequel to that understanding, to hold out his arms in anguished pleading that she would now and for ever accept his strength and protection, was, from her circumstances, flatly impossible. Julian could not, however, disguise his

choking mood of protective tenderness, and perhaps nothing is so dangerously moving as the unwonted softness of a naturally stern man.

Audrey sat flushing and paling, making an ineffectual barrier of Lanyon's proof-slip—itself symbolical of the scruples which prevented them from being plain with each other—whilst he stood with one elbow leaning on the mantelpiece, looking away from her into space with heavily brooding eyes. Both were thinking and feeling so much that the silence was full of tumultuous emotion. As they could not rush together like two children glad to be out of the wood, it seemed absurd to speak for the sake of speaking; and since there were no curious witnesses, there was no need to cut short the sacramental moment.

Whatever could not be said between them was settled then without words. Thereafter they bided their time without a moment's misconception on either side. When at last Audrey, unable to bear the silence any longer, spoke once more, it was with the frank recognition that they were never again to shirk personalities.

“You will win,” she said in a low voice.

Julian looked at her with a quizzical smile. Being sure about what he wanted to know, he characteristically put it on one side, and bent his mind to the relatively unimportant matter which could be talked about.

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“Talk about winning in three months’ time,” he said ; “do you know the Lancashire mind?”

“No,” she laughed.

“It is very important, I assure you. What Lancashire thinks to-day, England thinks to-morrow—which explains most of England’s blunders. Within the circle of its own interests it sees with merciless clearness ; outside, that it doesn’t see at all. Very admirable for the purposes of getting on, but not conducive to an attitude of self-renunciation.”

“It means that ?”

“Everything means that, and that means everything,” he said.

She nodded gravely.

“I begin to see your difficulties,” she said ; “though I believe that even the Lancashire mind will be convinced of the necessity for sacrifice, or at least that you can’t eat your cake and have it. But I don’t envy you the task of convincing it.”

“Oh, it’s my trade,” he said lightly. “In Parliament one learns to take nothing for granted.”

“I’m afraid I take everything for granted.”

“There’s just the risk, for example,” said Julian, “that you are taking my success for granted.”

“No,” said Audrey, emphatically. “Of course,

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I trust my intuitions a long way; but, beyond and apart from them, there is every reason to believe that the times are ripe. It's your opportunity."

"Of course, if I didn't think that, I shouldn't have the courage to go on," said Julian; "but it's just as well to remember that, though the times are ready, people are not without a wearisome amount of talking."

"Bother the people!" said Audrey, impatiently. "I always think that, if people are not born convinced, no amount of talking will convince them."

"Quite true; but, you see, we don't want convictions at first, but votes."

"I suppose the votes are necessary," she said, with a sigh.

"We live by them."

"Ah, yes, the others; but not——" "You," she was about to say, but diluted it to "a thing that is so obviously sane and true."

"So is Christianity," he said dryly; "yet look at all the fuss about denominational schools. You see," he continued, "even when people have agreed that a thing is sane and true, they have their own ideas about the way it is to be achieved, and if they don't like your way they won't vote for it. . . . It's the conscientious people who make trouble, not the frankly selfish or indifferent."

"Like Sir Peter Lawrence," said Audrey,

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perversely, and partly because her ideas about Amy wanted clearing up.

“Exactly,” said Julian, stopping in his walk. “By the way, does Mr. Lanyon know how we got our information about the New Century business?”

“No,” said Audrey. “Why?”

“Well,” said Julian, after a moment’s hesitation, “we—that is to say, my sister and I—wished as far as possible to spare Miss Lawrence the inconvenience of being mixed up in the affair. I’m taking it for granted that *you* know all about it?”

“Miss Lawrence brought me the papers first,” said Audrey, demurely.

“What?” he said bluntly, wheeling round in astonishment. “Brought them to you, did she? Well, if it isn’t an impertinent question, why didn’t you hand them over to me?”

A woman’s jealousy is more subtle than a man’s. She is jealous not because she imagines a reason, but simply of the other woman. Audrey was heartily ashamed, not of her jealousy, but because she had betrayed it. Julian’s unquestioning confidence in herself put her out of countenance, and she answered conventionally enough—

“I thought, perhaps, on our short acquaintance——”

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“Oh!” he cried, with a great laugh, staring at her as if trying to get her point of view. Conventional rules seemed so far behind them that he could only imagine a delicate check to himself. He stood frowning impatiently at her. “Surely we can take each other for granted,” he said sharply.

“Anyhow, I didn’t know then,” she stammered lamely.

Julian seemed satisfied, and only said—

“But I wonder why Miss Lawrence thought of you, of all people?”

Audrey smiled at his stupidity.

“Being about her father, I suppose it seemed less difficult to tell another woman than a man,” she said, feeling that loyalty to her sex forbade betraying its crooked motives.

“How odd!” said Julian, in despair of understanding her. “Would you have done that now?”

“I? No. But I am different from Miss Lawrence. I am in the habit of acting for myself. Life has not been padded for me.”

“However,” said Julian, again pacing the room, “I’m glad she did. You understand her feelings, but there’s a possibility Mr. Lanyon wouldn’t. I don’t mean that he would willingly cause Miss Lawrence pain, but his righteous anger might lead him to disregard her.” He

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stopped short, and then continued with some embarrassment, "Now, I want to ask you something that may hurt you. Can I trust Mr. Lanyon implicitly?"

There was a momentary conflict of relative loyalties in Audrey's mind.

"Do you mean as regards yourself, or your work?" she asked in a low voice.

"I don't see that there can be any distinction for him," he began reflectively. "However, I mean, he will work loyally with Mr. Tate?"

"Of course," she said warily. "They don't like each other."

"Ah, that's mere personal prejudice—not surprising if you consider the men."

"Well, then, so long as your politics agree with his notions, he will be a useful colleague; when they don't, he will be an earnest enemy; but you will know it. He is one of the conscientious people, you know."

"Then I don't think there's much fear of our falling out," said Julian, brusquely—"do you?"

"No," said Audrey, though her tone was not very emphatic.

She was unreasonably impatient with Julian's slowness of mind. From his question it was quite evident that Tate had given him some sort of warning about possibilities of trouble

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with Lanyon ; but how could she in cold blood point out exactly where the danger of their falling out lay ? She wondered if Tate knew. Audrey Thurston was too old for coquetry, and there was too much sadness involved with the idea of Lanyon to allow her any thrill at the prospect of being a cause of difference between two men. Her circumstances robbed her of a privilege which, it is said, the noblest of her sex is not above appreciating. She knew that she, not Julian, would have to bear the brunt of Lanyon's anger and jealousy if—— She flushed hotly, and put up her hand to her face. It was Julian's dulness, she cried in her heart, that made her thoughts travel so recklessly.

"I need not tell you," he said, misunderstanding the cause of her flush, "how highly I appreciate Mr. Lanyon's co-operation. Indeed, my question shows the importance I attach to him. There is not another man of my acquaintance who has the peculiar knowledge and power to fill his place. He seems to have reached a position of detachment from human affairs which reminds me of Tolstoy ; indeed, he goes farther than Tolstoy, he seems incapable even of indignation ; at least, he never shows it. Yet it is not because he is indifferent or insensible ; nobody is keener to detect folly or injustice. . . . I often regret my own lack of self-control : when a thing

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is manifestly wrong or absurd I can't help showing feeling. I am very human."

"For which you do not appear to be duly thankful," was Audrey's inward comment. After all, it would be interesting to have Xantippe's inner life sympathetically rendered.

"But I am hindering you!" exclaimed Julian, coming to himself with a start.

Audrey stooped to pick up a book and to hide a smile. She was glad that she could laugh at him when he prosed.

"Don't you want to see Mr. Tate?" she asked soberly.

"I shall see him this evening in any case," he answered; then with repressed eagerness, "When shall I see you again?"

"Not for some time," she said hurriedly; "we are going back to Chy-an-dreath to-morrow." She was nervous, now that she saw the blank look in his eyes.

"I may write?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes—no, I think you had better not," she answered, refusing to look at him.

She held out her hand.

"Well, wish me luck at Liverpool," he said, with a grim smile.

"Oh, the best of luck," she murmured confusedly.

As he went into the outer office, Julian

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cannoned against Sir Peter Lawrence, who immediately, but with insufficient art, began to breathe distressedly. He tapped his chest and shook his head.

“These confounded stairs,” he said. “But, my dear boy, have you heard the news?”

“What news?” asked Julian, rather irritably, because he felt sure that Sir Peter had been waiting for some time. He held open the door for the shipowner to pass out.

“Astbury’s dead,” gasped Sir Peter. “I made up my mind that I would bring you the news myself, so”—with inimitable slyness—“so I tracked you here.”

The two men slowly descended the stairs in silence.

“Tremendous stroke for you,” said Sir Peter, eyeing Julian anxiously when they had reached the bottom.

“Yes, yes,” muttered Julian, “but I don’t understand. I saw Astbury yesterday.”

“He’s quite dead now,” said Sir Peter, wagging his head solemnly. “Heart, heart! Listen—they’re crying it already!”

He stood with uplifted hand, his dull eyes distended. In his expression might be read admiration for the alacrity of the press, triumph in the speedy corroboration of his news, and a comment on the shortness of life.

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“Hi!” he cried, as a passing newsboy, aproned in a contents bill, opened his mouth to shout at them as they stood on the step.

Sir Peter solemnly unfolded the sheet and pointed to the headline with his forefinger.

“There,” he said.

Julian read that the President of the Board of Trade had died in a cab on his way home from Whitehall Gardens. After the first shock of the news, the significance of it to himself was coming to Julian.

Sir Peter watched Julian curiously, as if he expected him to shout “Hooray!” and was a little disappointed by his cool reception of the news. He agitatedly put on a glove and pulled it off again.

“I say,” he said argumentatively, laying his hand on Julian’s arm, “you could have knocked me down with a feather; made me feel quite ill for a moment. I was in the reading-room at the Club. Somebody came in and said, ‘Astbury’s dead.’ I said, ‘What!’ just like that. I haven’t had such a shock since the news of the King’s illness. . . . I tell you what, Julian, it makes a man stop and think, doesn’t it? There was Astbury”—he pointed to a passer-by, who half halted and moved on, looking wonderingly over his shoulder—“there was Astbury, in the prime of life—how old was he?”—he seized the paper

and ran along the lines with his thumb—"born in '48—ah, fifty-four, in the prime of life, as I say" (Sir Peter was fifty-six), "in his office, engaged in his usual duties. Nothing to worry him, Parliament prorogued, and everything going smoothly. He takes a cab, just as I might take a cab—no, no, damn you!" (this to a hansom driver, misled by his illustration)—"and in five minutes hurried into eternity. . . . Quite . . . dead. . . . Well, where was I? Ah, as I was saying, I said to Duffus—you know Duffus?—I said, 'Where's Julian? Does *he* know?' Duffus stared at me like a stuck pig. So I rushed off to find the porter. 'Where's Mr. Julian?' I asked. 'Dunno, sir,' he said, 'dunno.' I took him by the arm—devilish frightened he looked too. '*Find out*,' I said, just like that; and showed him a shilling. Off he went, and came back with word that you had gone here. . . . I pushed him on one side and rushed out, called a hansom, and told the man to drive like Hell."

Sir Peter drew a long breath, and, taking off his hat, wiped his forehead.

"So here I am, here I am," he said slowly, "fifty-four." He shook his head. "It's a warning to all of us. By the way, I don't believe I gave the porter that shilling, after all. Well, it can't be helped now. Come round, Julian, come round

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this evening and cheer us up," he said earnestly, taking Julian by the arm with an expression of decorous grief, as if Death had visited his own household.

Julian excused himself; he had business to attend to; Tate was dining with him.

"How's your sister?" asked Sir Peter, significantly, as if Mr. Astbury's death were contagious.

Julian murmured that Michal was quite well.

"That's right, that's right," said Sir Peter, encouragingly. "Well, I said I would bring you the news, and I did."

He moved off and left Julian to his reverie. Sir Peter and his news had cut off the idea of Audrey Thurston at a critical moment, and for the next two days the hurry and press of affairs left him no time to think about her.

Only when he was seated in the train travelling north her image came back to him.

"Oh, the best of luck," he murmured. He let down the window and looked out into the night. It had been raining, and the mild air was full of the mysterious odours of the earth. Overhead the stars were large and humid, like great dewy eyes. Audrey Thurston belonged somewhere with all this; she moved with the larger, quieter energies; one took her for granted with

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the stars, and it was only in moments like this that one comprehended how beautiful they were. She and they could be reached only after the fighting; yet what would the battle be without their inspiration?

CHAPTER XII

UDREY THURSTON walked along the cliff on a misty morning. Since her return from London a week before, she wanted to get out of the house and away from its influence as often as possible. She had thoughts to hide, and the negative observances of her daily life with Lanyon were no longer a sufficient barrier. He also seemed embarrassed, so that they nervously hurried over meal-times with forced conversation, only anxious to regain their own defences. There was a crisis coming, and both knew it; hoping for, yet dreading, the word that should precipitate the moment. They were afraid of each other, but for very different reasons. He, lest she should see in his eyes the dark suspicion that was poisoning his mind; and she, because there was coming into evidence a side of Lanyon's nature which, for all his punctual observance of their contract, she had always dreaded.

The lighthouse bell was tolling in measure to her thoughts. Here was the end and the burial of a phase of her life which she had honestly worked out to its last consequence. Though she had early recognized the terrible

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blunder of her headstrong girlhood, she had been very patient in bearing the burden. It had been a heavy burden—the knowledge of life wasted, power rusted ; and of late the despairing recognition that the tolerance of the world she had so undervalued was a necessary condition to the happiness flashed before her eyes. It is unfortunate that, in matters of social difference, you can't pay as you go. Here was the end even of patient endurance ; for the future her life would be a barren pretence made hideous by what, after all, was only a natural consequence of her foolish step. Audrey had told Julian with some pride that all her life she had acted for herself. Now she had a weak longing to be shown the next move. It is a natural weakness to look for help from those who awaken us out of ourselves.

The fog concentrated the presence of the sea, making it more significant for being invisible. A stranger would have supposed that he stood on an island. The noise of the sea was not rhythmical, but a continuous rushing, and it was impossible, except by previous knowledge, to tell where the sound came from. All round was the rushing of the sea. As Audrey approached the edge of the cliff, and peered down into the gulf, she could see a staining of the white veil, but no outlines ; she knew that the dark green was water, red-brown cliff, and the pale frosty green

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the descending spur of a sudden promontory. This confused blotting of colour was full of agitation and mystery; the sea was felt rather than seen.

And all her mental mist and uncertainty concentrated the rumour of the world. Things were moving forward towards a goal of tremendous significance, and one man, as yet only half recognized, was leading. She could stand beside him, as she had been content to live, in imagination; but now she recognized that it was not enough to stand beside him in imagination.

As Audrey moved forward, patches of colour grudgingly given up by the fog came into sight. On the slope of the cliff low-growing gorse trimmed into shapely and impenetrable thickets by the stern discipline of exposure, breadths of heather, sombre greens and dark wet purples. Out of the mist the bell was tolling a solemn note like the sombre colours, and punctuating the continuous rushing of the sea like the *cæsura* of a mighty verse. It was impossible either to stand still or to hurry under the domination of that sound. Direction mattered nothing, nor the passage of time. Onward...onward...onward.

Audrey had lost her way in life as she now seemed to be losing her way in this place she knew so well. There was the guidance of the sea it is true, but beyond the knowledge that she

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must keep it on her left, it was not very helpful. Familiar landmarks were obliterated or confused out of all recognition.

Tired with her walk, Audrey struck off inland across the waste ground, meaning to return in a wide circle. She supposed that by walking away from the direction of the sea she would come upon the road that ran down through the shallow valley to Chy-an-dreath. She was presently girlishly thrilled to find that she really had lost her way. The momentary lightening of the mist in patches only confused her. She listened to try if she could identify the nearest point of the coast by a breach in the continuity of sound, but without result. She was not disturbed; something of the child survived in her, making the experience appeal to her imagination as a little adventure. She pushed forward in what she supposed was the right direction, feeling like a person in a fairytale, and filled with vague, pleasant anticipations.

All at once the veil was lifted, and right ahead was the lighthouse and the open sea. There was the reddened surf beating, all the brisk incident of the breakers, and the far line of coast running out to the promontory of Porthia. Over the sea were patches of pale blue sky, and the torn mist was scurrying eastward and inland. The lighthouse bell had ceased as if its purpose were achieved. Audrey burst into a shout of

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happy laughter. The apparition was so triumphantly *à propos*. The colour flashed into her cheeks, and she walked forward with decisive footsteps. In a quarter of an hour she had reached Chy-an-dreath.

As Audrey came into the dining-room Lanyon looked up from the table with a smile of welcome, and his eyes dwelt interestedly on her animated face. Taken off her guard, Audrey gave him a laughing description of her adventure; how she had lost and found herself in a half-acre. As she stood beside him with one hand resting on the table, Lanyon leaned forward and pressed her fingers. Audrey turned pale; she quietly slid her fingers from beneath his, moved away, and took her place at the other end of the table. She knew that the struggle was beginning; her heart was beating rapidly; she tried her utmost to keep cool and not to show any anger. Lanyon laughed bitterly.

“How you hate me!” he said in a low voice.

She did not answer, and they made a pretence of beginning their meal as if nothing had happened. Lanyon filled himself a glass of wine with a shaking hand, drank it off, and leaned back in his chair. His face was haggard, and he drummed nervously on the table with his finger-tips.

“Will you be good enough to tell me what I

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have done to cause you to take up this attitude?" he asked, with an assumption of carelessness.

She did not speak immediately.

"If there is any change, it is in yourself. You seem to be forgetting the terms on which we agreed to live together," she said coldly.

He smiled, with an attempt at mirth that only succeeded in being sardonic. Since their return, Audrey had noticed, besides the difference in his manner, a change in his physical movements, an unaccountable clumsiness in handling things, while his facial expression seemed to have become conscious and imperfectly controlled.

"No," he said, with a slight stammer, "I have not forgotten. . . . Did you not yourself say that the circumstances had changed since we made that compact—that we were to live differently?"

He continued aimlessly to break bread into his soup-plate, until it was piled up and the contents uneatable.

"The question was not, whether we were to make any difference in our own habits," said Audrey, "but whether we were to continue to cut ourselves off from other people? You agreed that we were denying ourselves a pleasure for no rational purpose, and I am grateful; but if I had known that you wished to alter our way of living, I——"

"One change isn't possible without the other,"

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he interrupted, pushing away his plate with a nervous movement.

“What do you mean?”

“We can’t associate with other people unless we accept their conventions,” he said, without meeting her eyes.

It was quite clear to Audrey that he could not screw up his courage to speak plainly; he hoped that she would discover his meaning. His lips quivered, and from pallor he changed to ghastliness. Her own shrinking from the idea he wished to suggest, kept her tongue-tied.

“For one thing,” he continued, raising his head, “it isn’t fair to you; surely you must see that.”

Though Audrey would rather not have spoken, she was too proud to pretend misapprehension.

“I don’t trouble myself about people’s opinions,” she said; “that was foreseen from the first. I am quite strong enough to face the criticism of my own deliberate actions.”

“But you are denying me a privilege,” he said. “I admit that I made a blunder, and I have a right to ask that you should allow me to rectify it.”

Audrey knew it was cowardice which made her answer him in an empty phrase.

“I did not say that you blundered,” she said in a low voice.

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“Ah,” he cried, with bitter impatience, “isn’t your face a living accusation nowadays? Every time you look at me, it is only to remind me that I have spoiled your life. You didn’t mind till lately, because there was nobody whose good opinion you wanted. But you’ve made new friends, and the condition of their friendship is—respectability. Well,” he said, with a short, nervous laugh, “I want to give you respectability.”

“What do you mean, Chris?” she asked, staring at him in wonder.

He leaned forward, and said with jerky earnestness—

“Why shouldn’t we be married, Audrey—why shouldn’t we?”

The idea seemed so grotesque that Audrey laughed. A moment after, when it was too late, she perceived how cruelly she had wounded his vanity. Lanyon flushed up to his hair.

“Ah, don’t think that of me, Chris,” she said in a tone of deep contrition, and involuntarily holding out her hand. “I did not mean to hurt you. But that is impossible, and you know it is.”

“But why?” he asked in a dull voice.

She was very agitated; the new, true reason why she could not marry him sprang so vividly into her mind that her cheeks burned crimson.

“It’s too late to think of mending matters

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now," she said. " Could any respect survive such a conclusion ? You would despise me utterly for taking advantage of your sacrifice, and I should hate myself."

" It would be no sacrifice to me, Audrey," he said earnestly. " I'm not ashamed to say that my views of life have changed. We made a mistake."

Audrey did him the justice to believe that he spoke sincerely, which made it all the harder for her. How could she be equally honest ?

" We have been very loyal to each other," she murmured sadly.

" Have been ? " he echoed.

" We have been happy, and we ought to be happier now that we have found active interests in common to take us out of ourselves. We made a blunder in isolating ourselves from the rest of the world ; we were not strong enough to bear solitude. We tried an experiment, and I'm not going to admit that the experiment failed, because I still believe it is possible for people to live happily together as we proposed to live. We have learned something by our experience."

Audrey knew that she was talking cant ; that it was their feelings towards each other and not their opinions that had changed.

" Yes, but what have we learned ? " he exclaimed. " I have learned that I am a man and not a machine. God, what a fool I was ! You

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have every reason to despise me." He laughed bitterly. "I wanted the higher life; I persuaded you to help me to attain it, and now I would give my soul for the common lot with you. And you refer me to the higher life! . . . Just tell me this, Audrey," he continued: "I want to know exactly the depth of my folly. Was there ever a time when you would have married me?"

"Yes; I believe there was a time when I would have married you," she said in a low voice.

"It was when we were so poor, before we went abroad?"

She did not answer.

"I thought so," he said—"I thought so. Then it is because I am too old? '*Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait!*'" he bitterly quoted. "But remember, you yourself are no longer young. It would be what the world calls an equal match. I want no romance, no heroic passion, only the sober affection of husband and wife."

"No, it is not because you are too old; that is ridiculous. Ten years don't make all that difference."

He rose from his chair with the hopeless hope that pleading might further him where argument failed.

"Have you no heart, Audrey? Don't you understand that, in spite of all my philosophy, I have learned that love is the master? That the

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men and women I so despised were right after all, and I was wrong ? Why should you shrink from my love ? I am not deformed ; I am not too old—you yourself say that." He tried to take her hand. " Audrey, what is your reason ? "

" Oh, for pity's sake, don't persecute me !" she said, shrinking away from him. " If you persist in this folly, I shall be forced to leave you."

Lanyon's face hardened, and an evil meaning came into his eyes.

" Don't force me to tell you the truth," he said significantly ; " you say that we have found active interests. Oh yes. In common ? No ! Ah, you turn away your head. . . . Then, I am right. I don't accuse ; I leave you to your conscience. But you might at least do me the honour to be candid with me. I frankly confess that the passions of the average man are too strong for me. I don't justify myself with any cant about principles. I love you ; I crave for you as the average man craves for the average woman. You ? Oh, you have not changed. You still believe that it is possible for men and women to live together in a cold union of the spirit ; but you do not state the most important article of your creed, ' If their more tender instincts are satisfied elsewhere.' It is a little like Artemus Ward and the Shakers, isn't it ? We have found active interests ! True ; it is a game, an amusing

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game for you. It is a game of odd man out, and it is my happy fortune to be the odd man. Your 'active interests' do not allow you to think about the odd man."

Audrey rose abruptly, and without a word left the room.

Later in the day Lanyon came to her in an abject condition she found more disturbing than his anger.

"Audrey," he said, or rather whimpered, "I was unjust to you. I had no right to say what I did, but I was beside myself. For God's sake don't leave me! You, on your cold height, cannot understand the tortures I am suffering. Is there nothing I can do to please you?"

She tried to hide her repulsion from him, and watched him warily. The extravagance of his language, the shocking alternation of his moods, were a new development. In either state of threatening or servility he seemed sincere, yet she could not believe that the shrugging cynicism of past years had been a pose.

For some weeks she had been haunted by a fear she tried to put aside as ridiculous. She could not ignore little changes in his physical habit—a fixity of the eye, a fine tremor of the lips, a tendency to both slurring and over-articulation in his speech. Had she not known him so well, she might have suspected that he was

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drinking. She was puzzled and alarmed, for it seemed as if he were no longer master of himself ; that he might act with the unpredictable impulses of a wild animal. She spoke to him now as one would reason with a child.

“ No ; I won’t leave you if you will observe our usual conditions,” she said. “ I don’t think there is any need to change our way of living. I am quite contented. I believe it would do us both good to see more people and to have a more frequent change of scene—that is all.”

“ Yes, yes,” he said eagerly ; “ where shall we go ? Would you like Paris, or Nice, or the Black Forest ? I have often heard you say that you would like to see the Black Forest. It is absurd that with no ties and plenty of money we should remain here from year’s end to year’s end.”

The wide scope of his proposal and his allusion to money startled her, but she controlled her face, and by a happy thought hit upon a plausible objection.

“ Well,” she said, as if his plan were the most natural thing in the world, “ it wouldn’t be very convenient to go abroad just now ; you wouldn’t like to desert Mr. Tate in a crisis, would you ? ”

“ No, of course not,” he agreed.

He got up, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, began to pace up and down the room.

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“ Tate is all right, but he’s too timid. That’s because he isn’t sure of himself. He hasn’t had the training, you know ; he knows nothing about social movements. I have to spoon-feed him. . . . You see, Audrey,” he continued, ruffling his hair and knitting his brows, “ a paper like *The Bell* ought to be run by a man who has the whole subject philosophically and historically at his finger-ends ; a man that can compare systems and trace the central ideas of collectivism, as modified by period, through the imperfect schemes of such men as Owen, Lasalle, and Carl Marx. Of course, we have outgrown these men, but it is necessary to be familiar with their work. Tate’s training has been entirely literary ; he gets his ideas from Plato, More, Harrington. Imagine a man quoting More at this time of day ! Yet Tate is so satisfied with himself that, as you know, he offered me the subeditorship under him. Of course, I couldn’t accept it ; it wouldn’t have been fair to myself. . . . If Julian knew his interests he’d get rid of Tate and let me run *The Bell*.”

He talked rapidly, with a swaggering emphasis quite new to him.

“ Mr. Julian doesn’t under-rate you,” said Audrey, diplomatically. “ Perhaps he’s afraid that if you had the paper altogether in your hands you’d move a little too fast. You see, he isn’t a

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free lance ; it's necessary that he should keep in touch with his party though ahead of it."

Lanyon laughed knowingly ; he seemed as pleased as a child.

" Too fast, eh ? " he said. " That's a very good joke. They're beginning to realize who I am. . . . However, whether they give me a free hand or not, it will be all the same in a year or two. They will have to recognize me when my time comes. When I've shoved through this Bill of Julian's—for it is Julian's, in fact—I shan't stop, you may be sure." He broke off suddenly, and turned to her with a dazed look, which, in spite of her shrinking from him, she found pathetic. " That is why I want you to marry me, Audrey ; I want you to share my triumph. I shall be a Napoleon of the mind, the Lion of intellect. Like Pierpont Morgan I shall boss Creation ; not with money, but brains. . . . Well, think it over, think it over. I don't want to press you for your answer ; " and he went out of the room gaily humming a tune.

Audrey Thurston was courageous, but Lanyon's outbursts of egoism frightened her. There was something uncanny about the change in him—a hint of evil potentialities she had not reckoned with. Morally, she was more than a match for him, and in a verbal dispute her irony was more effective than his because she took herself less

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seriously. Of course it was quite possible that Lanyon was assuming this extraordinary manner with the hope of frightening her into acceding to his wishes, but the mere fact that he thought it worth while to pretend proved that she had not understood him. That was the terrible thing ; she did not understand him, and felt that a situation might arise in which it would be as useless to reason with him as with a tiger. She wished he could be persuaded to see a doctor, but she was afraid to make the suggestion. And indeed Lanyon seemed to be in remarkably good bodily health. He had broken his valetudinarian rules of life and taken to eating meat ; his appetite had improved ; he was growing stouter, and was bustling and energetic. It was now evident that there was a man in the house ; all their prim habits had only allowed for the presence of two minds with but a conventional difference between them. They had often laughed together over the popular superstitions about men—the maxim, “feed the brute,” and the quaint custom, a relic of barbarism, of leaving men to their wine as we should leave animals to the exercise of propensities unpleasant to witness. Now Lanyon began to insist with a sort of pride on the peculiar importance of his body. He bragged about his strength, and called her to witness feats of prowess. From being careless in his dress he was now

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almost choice, and consulted her about the colour of his neckties. He became reckless in money matters, and talked grandly about extensive improvements in his tin-streaming machinery. Curiously, in spite of his extravagant notions, he showed his usual, or even a heightened, mental ability in all practical affairs. But always there was a restlessness, a loudness of voice, and irresponsible changes of mood. The most terrifying thing to Audrey was his new consciousness of sex. He had fits of boisterous though as yet verbal love-making ; he recited Swinburne with intention, and even wrote verses of his own of a pronouncedly erotic character, which he left about in places where Audrey was likely to find them.

In spite of all her fear and disgust, Audrey could not but feel that there was a crude poetic justice in the situation. Their compact had been based on the argument that love between men and women was a silly convention to excuse sheer animalism or weak sentimentality. Their high-hearted determination to make their lives a protest against the lusts of the flesh on the one hand, and tepid marriage on the other, had ended in the discovery by her that love was a real and a sacred thing, and, for him, in an awful collapse into the basest form of passion stripped of all the sentiments that make it tolerable.

CHAPTER XIII

JULIAN saw very clearly that the result of the Liverpool meeting, though favourable to himself, was not due to his own eloquence, and, though a large majority of the persons present promised him their support, he was unreasonable enough to feel disappointed. Most politicians would have been satisfied with immediate results, but Julian looked far ahead—too far ahead possibly—and recognized that the people he had been addressing had entirely misunderstood his ultimate objects. His chairman had explained him to his complete dissatisfaction, and all Julian's attempts to disclaim the motives imputed to him had been drowned in applause.

The friendliness of the meeting was due to a coincidence of accidental causes; chiefly to the feeling amongst shipowners that even their immediate interests were not furthered by the Atlantic Combination. Their faith in the inestimable advantages of huge combinations of capital had been rudely shaken by the coal strike in America. They felt that there might be some truth in the warning that the more completely an industry is monopolized, the more completely it is at the mercy of the labourers engaged in it.

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Carlyle's image of the two vortices eating up the solid ground between them came freshly into men's minds. They began to see that combination brought nearer a condition in which William Morris's idea of a universal strike—ridiculed as an impossible dream in the labour conditions of his day—was quite practicable, at least, in any particular industry. And in addition to these speculative dangers, the proposal that the purchase-money for English lines should be re-invested in trust shares, had, whether justifiably or not, thrown suspicion on the soundness of the concern.

The fact that whether the combination benefited them or not, they could not long resist it with their own resources, inclined shipowners to listen favourably to any reasonable proposal. If they were compelled to sell their rights, this Bill brought another customer into the market whose credit was better than the combination's, even if it did not offer such extravagant terms. Possibly, too, with the entrance of such a powerful competitor into the game, there might be room for all. Little boys at school welcome the advent of a rival to the big boy who might otherwise have things all his own way. Mr. Morgan might make their own position extremely uncomfortable, but all his dollars could not break the British Empire.

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Sir Peter Lawrence, who had taken care not to travel to Liverpool with Julian, nor to communicate with him until he saw which way the sympathies of the meeting were going, sought him out afterwards at the North Western Hotel, positively foaming at the mouth with congratulations. He could not understand why Julian was not more elated.

"Why, my dear sir," he cried, "if you can carry a meeting like that in the very heart of the shipping interest, your Bill is as good as passed."

"Why do you suppose they supported me?" asked Julian, turning on him sharply.

"Because they see which side their bread is buttered," replied Sir Peter. "If you want to get a man to do a thing," he continued oracularly, "make him see that it will pay him. If you'll allow me to criticize, I don't think you rammed that home hard enough, and I think you missed a point in not at least hinting what terms the Government is likely to offer for purchase. If you didn't know, you should have bluffed. However, putting it as mildly as you did, I think they grasped the fact that, in the long run, it will pay them to keep under the Union Jack."

"I was afraid that was the feeling," said Julian, moodily.

Sir Peter twisted himself in his chair and stared at him.

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“Eh? I should have said and a damned good job too,” he said irritably. “What more do you want?”

“I don’t want that sort of thing at all; it doesn’t touch the question,” said Julian, smiling grimly.

“Well, what does?”

They were almost alone in the big coffee-room of the hotel. Outside was the roar of the traffic in Lime Street—the rattle of cabs rounding the corner into the station, the muffled shriek of engines, the plangent ringing of electric trams.

Julian held up his hand.

“That touches it,” he said quietly.

“Oh, Lord!” said Sir Peter, with a groan of non-comprehension, “what has all that got to do with us?”

“That depends on ourselves,” said Julian, dryly. “I merely want to point out that by the side of those people in the street, and the life they represent, the respective profits of your friends under the Union Jack or the Stars and Stripes are of no consequence whatever.”

Sir Peter Lawrence gulped down his whisky and looked angrily round the room for somebody to come to his support, but without success.

“Then we’ve been had,” he said. “You come down here and address a meeting of hard-headed business men on a question which

concerns their vital interests, and when you've got their confidence by pretending that you are backing a Bill to protect them against unfair competition, you turn round and snap your fingers in their faces. You may have all sorts of fine schemes for the Empire up your sleeve, but we don't care a damn about that. Charity begins at home. We're sick of this Wall Street plunging. What we want to know is which will pay us best—to stand in with the Morgan people or to stand out. You tell us that it will pay us to stand out and take our chance with the Government, and, on the whole, we're inclined to agree with you—and we say so in plain language. So far well and good, and nobody wants to grumble. But then you come straight out of St. George's Hall and sit down here, and calmly tell me that, so far as you're concerned, we can all go to hell or Morgan: I tell you, Julian, people won't stand it. It isn't the first time your lot has tried the same dodge, and there was a very nasty feeling in the country about the khaki vote and the Education Bill. When people plank down their votes, they like to have a clear idea what they are getting for them."

Having confirmed his estimate of the moral value of Liverpool's support to the Bill, Julian saw that it would be unwise to explain his motives any further.

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“A very sound principle, of course,” he said gravely, “and I’m glad to know that we are not gaining any sympathy on false pretences. I don’t think you need worry about getting what you want; but I wished to make it quite clear that I don’t identify myself with any particular interest. That’s understood, then?” he said, rising.

Sir Peter laughed cynically.

“I think it’s pretty generally understood that you’ve got a bee in your bonnet,” he said, “but that’s no business of ours. So long as you lift us out of the rut, we shan’t bother our heads about where you think you’re driving to.”

With which pithy sentence he summed up the fine, far-sighted conception of politics held by that miracle of our civilization, the man in the street.

The special charm of political life is its uncertainty. As Sir Peter Lawrence had shrewdly surmised, Mr. Astbury’s death was Julian’s opportunity for a promotion as rapid as it was unexpected. He was invited to fill the dead man’s place in the Cabinet, and thus obtained supreme charge of the measure he had so ardently supported.

Randal Tate was present at the debate on the second reading of the Imperial Shipping Bill. His first impressions of the House were disappointing. The packed Gallery itself was hushed with expectancy, but, down below, the scene was oddly unreal, resembling a dream-picture, or at least a

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spectacle retained before the eyes only with an effort of the imagination. Tate found himself staring at the lounging figures in a fever lest they should melt into vapour when he awoke. They meant nothing; they had no basis in reality; they affected him as the images in one of his own poems when imperfectly "seen." He could not believe that they were actual; and, as a creative effort, they wanted grip. Here and there Tate recognized a faded resemblance to some figure made familiar by the public prints; but, by contrast with his vivid anticipation, as unconvincing as if the real owner of the seat were absent, and his place and function usurped by an inefficient understudy. The whole scene, indeed, appealed to him as an indifferent representation of the real thing. Tate could not hear very clearly what was being said, and he tried unsuccessfully to reason himself out of the profound conviction that it didn't matter; that the speakers were idle visions haunting his subconsciousness. This idea was supported by the stony inattention of the rest of the House; apparently a speaker was only disconcerted when he found that somebody was listening to his remarks.

Members began to stroll in by twos and threes, talking and laughing together. Every now and then a man—excitedly recognized by the occupants of the Gallery—emerged from

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behind the Speaker's chair, took his place on the Treasury bench, and stared up at the green canopy as if it contained the substance of his melancholy reflections.

All this time men were rising to speak, presumably about affairs of importance. For the most part, only a monotonous burr came up to Tate, broken by an occasional yelp as the speaker's voice rose with excitement, while his arm waved in a perfunctory gesture.

Unconsciously Tate glanced up into the panelled roof for the large hand idly playing with the strings of these puppets.

The heartlessness of the assembly began to get on his nerves. His eyes returned again and again to Julian, sitting bolt upright on the Treasury bench, with his hands clasped about his knee, and he felt an impulse to shout at him to put an end to the numbing spell which deprived all these men of volition. Would he never move?

At last the occupants of the benches wavered, and their heads turned all one way, their faces showing like the white undersides of leaves stirred by a sudden puff of wind. Half a dozen men hurried into the House; there was a rustle and a murmur, and Julian shot up. Unconsciously Tate himself half rose.

Julian used few gestures, but every line of his slightly stooping figure spoke of tension and

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earnestness. It was the attitude of pleading—of the man charged with a message, for which he took no credit to himself, and which he could not, if he would, dilute to the comfortable acceptance of his hearers. The apparent effect upon them was one of irritation, as if a hive of drowsy bees had been rudely disturbed.

Tate followed Julian's words with painful eagerness. All the time he had the curious feeling that there was somebody beside him with whom he wished to share his emotion. Every now and then he turned his head, and missed the face he expected. Seemingly, Julian meant no more than any other speaker to most of the people who sat in the Gallery, and Tate was unreasonably angered by their indifference. He frowned impatiently upon whisperers, attracted attention, and was recognized with nods and smiles. Presently Tate knew that he was haunted by the presence of Audrey Thurston : he felt that she ought to be there. Just at that moment, of all Julian's relations, to the House, to the Empire, to the world, his relation to Audrey Thurston seemed to come first in Tate's mind. One name suggested the other like a reflex. This was the first time he had definitely associated the two together, and the idea worried him. He tried to dismiss the conjunction from his mind as accidental ; he tried to think of Michal, but it

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was no use. Undoubtedly Audrey Thurston ought to be there.

In debate Julian had the art which conceals art, attacking a subject apparently as a disinterested observer, so that unwary people were beguiled into supposing that he had neglected to make himself familiar with details.

He began by gently bantering the House on its modesty in disclaiming any motives higher than expediency. Why take such pains to draw a distinction between moral and political right? They were not consistent even in this, for they agreed to hate and condemn war with the sword, not because it was inexpedient, but because it was morally wrong. Why should they not be equally frank in condemning the chief cause of war, irresponsible commercial enterprise?

At present they tolerated the cause, and cried out upon its natural consequences. Indeed, they did not wait for open war, but began to be alarmed when commercial enterprise reached a certain inevitable stage in its development. Where was the essential difference between a company and a syndicate? If the White Star Company was a good institution, then the Atlantic Combination was a better, because there was more of it. A thing that was essentially good did not organically develop into something evil. Morality was not a question of size, and moral institutions did not

become immoral by amalgamation. A trust was not more immoral than a limited liability company; it was bigger, and certain evils it entailed were more obvious—such as the arbitrary control of prices, and the possibilities of friction on a large scale between employers and employed.

They had recently an object-lesson in a country towards which they were implored to look for the happy elucidation of commercial problems. In that country, as in their own, disputes between a trades union and a federation of employers were usually ignored by the State and left to settlement by arbitration or conciliation. It was held improper for the State to interfere with freedom of contract between master and servant. But when the Coal Strike in the United States reached a certain magnitude the State interfered. If a company were properly allowed freedom to settle its own affairs, he could only describe the action of the United States Government towards the Coal Trust as a tyrannous interference with the liberty of the subject. The very phrase, "Anti-Trust Legislation," was either a confession of the flattest inconsistency, or else it implied Anti-Company legislation. People professed to see in the larger concern a menace to society not inherent in the smaller. On that principle, while condemning war, they ought to have excused the Jameson Raid because it was only a little one.

The Atlantic Shipping Combination was supposed to be a danger to England because it implied the control of British vessels by American capitalists. Indeed, certain American politicians, whether responsible or not he was not prepared to say, hinted that in the event of war England must not expect the use of her vessels sailing under the American flag. On the other hand, a prominent British naval authority welcomed the combination as a means towards preserving universal peace. All this was beside the question. If they acquiesced in the conditions which made the combination possible, they ought not to worry about or legislate against their ultimate consequences.

However, on the supposition that the Atlantic Combination was a national danger, it had been proposed to deal with it by paying the owners of British lines a subsidy to remain loyal, and a Parliamentary Committee had drawn up an elaborate report defining the cases in which subsidies should be granted. Putting aside the anomaly of the State paying rent for what existing law in the extradition treaties defined as its own territory, where was the principle going to end? In the future every shipowner who knew his business would play off the American capitalist against the British Government for the highest terms he could get.

Even on the ground of expediency, then, he ventured to think that Imperial ownership of steamers would be an advantage, but he preferred to regard this Bill rather as a step towards that larger betterment of humanity to which that assembly was implicitly pledged.

But for one factor monopoly was the greatest commercial blessing that could happen to humanity, and that factor was precisely human nature. While human nature was what it was, no irresponsible individual or group of individuals, large or small, could be permitted to control the instruments of production or distribution for his or their own profit. That was properly the reason for Government. Government was not an abstract good in itself; like all other human institutions, it implied a recognition of the essential weakness of human nature. If men were perfect they would govern themselves. The purpose of Government was the compulsory recognition by the individual of the claims of the race. In considering these claims, it was a fatal mistake to make any particular class the unit. That was generally agreed, but what he would insist upon was that the unit must be not even the nation, but the Empire. The abstract moralist preached that the whole of humanity should be the unit, but he feared that in the present state of civilization there were practical reasons for observing political

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barriers. As the individual man must not organize his life upon the sum of his daily actions nor from the material to the spiritual, but upon some definite plan of conduct, so the Empire must be organized upon a broad moral basis, and not with reference to the emergencies of the moment. They must not wait till evil was obvious, but legislate to prevent the conditions in which it was inherent.

The evil that was obvious in the Shipping Trust was implied when the first body of traders wrote up "Co." on their shop front. Of course it was too late in the day arbitrarily to abolish free competition, but they could endeavour to supersede it by something better.

He had been accused of being unpractical. Well, the practical physician was not the man who tinkered with the symptoms of disease, but he who tried to remove the cause, and that not by extirpation of organs, but by altering the conditions in which the disease was implied. The Atlantic Shipping Combination, the American Coal Strike, the depression in trade in our own country, were symptoms of a disease, and that disease was irresponsibility.

Taking the Empire as unit, its most important functions were those performed by its means of communication—its steamships, ocean cables, and railways. Their first duty towards the Empire was to restore these functions to a healthy instead

of a morbid activity, and he believed that the Imperial Shipping Bill was the first practical step in this direction. It was important to remember that maritime trade within the Empire was not an international but a coasting trade.

There were many reasons why shipping should be their first and immediate consideration. An Imperial Parliament, and that assembly was Imperial in spirit if not yet in effect, should deal with Imperial questions. Experience showed that smaller governing bodies were competent to deal with smaller questions involving the same principle of responsibility to the State. Nothing as yet had been done towards the State control of home railways, though it was significant that in other parts of the Empire the advantages of Government railway enterprise were recognized even by the promoters of existing private lines. He instanced the proposal for a State Trans-Canadian Railway.

The practical benefits of an Imperial service of steamers between this country and Canada, running in connection with a Canadian State railway, were simply incalculable. Canada was continually crying out for more men; particularly in the North-West there was plenty of room. This room was being taken up by Americans. He had no reason to believe that these immigrants from the United States would not become loyal

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subjects of the Empire, but how much better if they were represented by an equal number of our own surplus population. In spite of all that had been done to encourage emigration, in spite of all that had been said about the obstacles to emigration, the chief obstacle to thousands of the most suitable persons was the expense of the voyage. The cheapest and most satisfactory method of assisting emigration was for the State to carry emigrants in its own vessels.

It had been objected to the Bill that it was socialistic in character. Well, they had inherited the forms of socialism whether they would or no. All commercial combinations had the external forms and material advantages of socialism without its ideal—the general good of the community. Socialism in some form was thrust upon them ; it was for them to choose between a form exploited by an irresponsible minority for their own profit, or that better socialism which contributed to the unity of the Empire as a living and self-supporting organism.

He concluded by quoting the words of a statesman of another party.

“ The advanced Liberals of his—James Mill’s—time were systematic, and they were constructive. They surveyed society and institutions as a whole ; they connected their advocacy of political and legal changes with theories of human

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nature ; they considered the great art of government in connection with the character of man, his proper education, his potential capacities. They could explain in the large dialect of a definite scheme what were their aims, and whither they were going."

Julian spoke for a little over an hour. He was answered by Mr. Hanson, ex-President of the Board of Trade, in a diabolically clever speech conceding the abstract purity and even the theoretical practicability of Julian's principles. Mr. Hanson gave the House to understand that long, long ago, he, too, had his — dreams, dreams. How many years ago he did not care to think, and only by the stern light of reality, he himself had been forced reluctantly to abandon views exactly similar to those held by the Right Honourable gentleman who had last spoken. "But for the grace of God and a hard-won political and economical experience," he implied, "there sits Matthew Hanson." For his part, he was not ashamed to say that he envied his Right Honourable friend his unspoiled illusions. He addressed his hearers as men who looked back with him, not unregretfully, upon a generous youth. "When all the world was young, lad . . . and every goose a swan." Very wise, very old, and very tender looked Mr. Hanson. He dwelt upon the Bill as one would ponder lovingly over the bright fancies of a child,

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and then he unfolded his papers, and, in the same tremulous tone of regret, poured a petrifying stream of facts and figures upon the assembly. In themselves these were unanswerable, and Julian's friends felt dismayed; but when Mr. Hanson had made an end, Julian rose, and with engaging candour observed that he did not propose to meet the Right Honourable gentleman's facts and figures upon that occasion. He believed them to be correct. Upon which the Opposition laughed ironically. When the noise had subsided, Julian continued that if the Right Honourable gentleman would give him three days, he would prepare another set of facts and another set of figures—also correct and equally misleading; and abruptly sat down.

Then there got upon his legs a suave gentleman, who, beginning by asking in a tone of mild inquiry what had become of the Potterbury Municipal Telephones, worked himself up into a frenzy of generous indignation. With tears in his eyes he implored the House to wake up. Why all this talk about human nature? What had they to do with human nature? Theirs was a business assembly—or ought to be. He quoted admirable articles proving that the decay of England's greatness was due to her neglect of American boot-machines, and to the retention of Greek in the Universities. "Efficiency," he roared,

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and again "Efficiency;" "Progress," and again "Progress."

To whom Julian replied that, in his opinion, where you were going was more important even than progress ; and that increased efficiency might only mean greater speed in the wrong direction.

There were many ups and downs, blowing of hot and cold, but in the end the Imperial Shipping Bill passed its second reading by a majority of ninety-seven.

CHAPTER XIV

IMEDIATELY the House rose, Tate went to the telegraph office, and sent a messenger to Cadogan Square, to give Michal the result of the evening sitting. When he returned, the Lobby was nearly empty, and Julian stood gazing with an expression of profound melancholy at the retreating figure of a man to whom he had been speaking. By Julian's side Tate felt very little and literary, though he could not help thinking that his friend took success over-critically. He touched his hand : Julian started, and together they moved out into the night.

When they got into a hansom, Julian sank back with a sigh of intense weariness.

" You're not satisfied ? " asked Tate.

" Oh, well enough," said Julian. " Ninety-seven seems a good majority, but, like all isolated facts, it may be discounted by circumstances which are not yet apparent. They probably will try to choke the Bill with amendments during the committee stage. I should prefer clean defeat to that. But it is our own people that depress me. They won't see first principles ; they are too facile ; they are taking this Bill on its own merits.

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I want them to regard it as a finger-post, a symptom, if you like, of the way we ought to be going. While Kennedy was speaking to-night, the whole thing flashed into my mind in these terms. If passed, the Bill will be accepted as a definite measure for a definite purpose, beginning and ending with itself; if it is thrown out, people will accept that as a proof that it is not needed; and the whole movement will be abandoned because the first step failed."

"You remain, in any case," said Tate, warmly.

"I am tortured by doubts whether an Act of Parliament is, after all, the lever by which people can be moved," said Julian, half talking to himself. "It is too concrete, and consequently not practical enough. It is a mere barricade, behind which the real work must be done. Who is there to do it? I am ready to spend myself to the last fibre, but unless I can get somebody to back me up, not in the concrete instance, but upon fundamental principles, all my efforts are useless. So far as I can see, all support is at present accidental."

Tate did not disturb his reverie. He was thinking how rapidly Julian had developed from cleverness to wisdom. A few months ago he would have been enthusiastic over his immediate success. He had become more tolerant, more humane, less sure of himself. It was as if he surveyed things from a greater height, and was

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perplexed, rather than helped, by a wider horizon. There was a danger that, seeing too much, he would hesitate.

“He must be very lonely up there,” thought Tate, whimsically; and his imagination immediately suggested a sympathetic companion. After all, it was no wonder, he admitted.

When they reached Julian’s house Tate’s messenger was just leaving, and Michal met them at the foot of the stairs with the pink paper in her hand. Ordinarily the Julians were averse from any demonstration of feeling, but to-night Michal swiftly descended the stair or two, and took her brother’s hands in her own. Her eyes travelled past him to Tate, who fancied an involuntary defiance in them, as if she challenged him to show her any other woman who could fill her place. And, indeed, as Tate observed the maternal tenderness with which she led her brother into the dining-room, and knelt beside him on the rug, he had a vague misgiving.

He knew now that he instinctively sided with Audrey Thurston; but supposing, after all, she failed of some delicate perception ignored by men, but which Michal knew to be necessary to her brother’s happiness? Tate had studied her too long and too lovingly not to comprehend that, while she absolved Audrey Thurston as a woman, she reserved everything in her acceptance of her

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in association with her brother. That was another matter.

Presently Julian asked for his letters. Michal always opened her brother's letters, answering social correspondence, and placing the rest on his desk. She now said that there were no letters of any consequence. Tate, looking at her with the faintest smile of inquiry, was interested, and not at all grieved by her amateurish attempt to deceive.

"Must you go through them to-night?" she asked of Julian, with heightened colour, and in a tone which would have attracted the notice of the least suspicious person.

"Why, no, not if they are of no importance," said Julian, looking at her curiously; then, with a touch of anxiety, "What has happened?"

"I will fetch the letter," said Michal, and hurriedly left the room.

Julian had flung himself into a deep chair, and, resting his head on his hand, stared into the fire. Tate took up a book and turned over the leaves, but his imagination followed Michal as she went slowly up the stairs; he saw her flush and pale, and bore with her the struggle in which she had nearly succumbed. For Tate felt convinced that the letter was one she would have destroyed.

Michal returned quite composed, and gave the letter to Julian, standing behind him with one

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hand resting on the back of his chair. Tate, standing on the shadowed side of the hearth, still turned over the leaves of his book, but watched Julian's face anxiously. Julian read through the letter once, twice, began it again, then held it down; the lines on his forehead deepening, his head sinking a little lower. He smiled slightly, and passed the letter to Tate. It was from Christopher Lanyon, and written in the manner of an open letter addressed to a hypothetical, rather than an actual person in Julian's position. He supposed that a first consequence of the Shipping Bill—which he took as passed—would be an increase of emigration.

“It is my privilege,” he said, “to be a born leader of men. Put me at the head of these wandering sheep. I have learned pity and patience; I know their needs and their aspirations, their strength and their weakness, their wisdom and their ignorance. I am the beacon of the outcast, the compass of the homeless. Look upon me as a new Moses illuminated by the burning bush, purified by the vision of God. I bear in my body the marks of the five wounds; I have been crucified, and am risen again with a glorious body. I have dwelt in the wilderness, and have wrestled with and overcome Satan, who is the Prince of this world. You, like the Pharisee, came to me by night, and heard my

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words, and so have obtained a measure of power even over the children of darkness, but without me you can do nothing, for I am the Light itself.

“Audrey Thurston is the predestined Bride, unspotted by the world. She, too, has dwelt with me in the wilderness. Our time has been one of probation, but now the hour is come; she has kept her lamp burning, and now comes to meet the Bridegroom. She is the Church which is not of this world. Together we shall renew the earth. From my loins shall spring the New Race: the people of the New Jerusalem.”

Tate read the letter, folded it together, and handed it back to Julian without speaking. He had been warned, but the collapse of Lanyon's mind was more rapid than he had expected.

Julian got up, and stood with his back to the fire. He looked from Michal to Tate, and back again. His sister's face was stonily impassive. For a moment a look of anger flashed into Julian's eyes, but Tate understood Michal better, and could forgive the stubborn reserve of her charity.

“A time-table,” said Julian, shortly.

Tate crossed over, and laid his hand on Julian's arm. He knew his privilege, and did not shrink from it.

“No,” he said. “It would be worse than

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useless for you to interfere. Lanyon's mad, of course; but what of that? The man's been mad all along. I know these women. If it were possible for Miss Thurston to consider herself, she would have done so long ago. Exactly so much of her as believed in Lanyon believes in him still, and you might as well try to thrust yourself between a mother and her baby as between them. Go down to Chy-an-dreath with your magistrate and your doctor, and see how Miss Thurston will receive you. She'll meet you with a white face, and she'll lie—God! how a woman can lie to the man she loves. 'Madman? No, I've no madman here—if I have, it's no business of yours. How dare you come into my house prying and asking questions! When I want you, I'll send for you.' Then she'll shut the door in your face, and resume the breaking of her heart."

Julian moved impatiently away from him.

"It's intolerable," he said. "I should have thought that you would have held out your hand to any woman under the circumstances," he added bitterly, to Michal.

"If Miss Thurston asks me to help her in any way, I will certainly do so," said Michal. "Would you like me to ask her to stay with me?"

Julian was on the edge of an angry retort

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upon what he thought was a deliberately useless suggestion, but a glance from Tate checked him, and he said instead—

“As soon as it is possible for me to do so, I intend to ask Miss Thurston to be my wife.”

“So I supposed,” said Michal, coldly; “and, as I am equally sure of her answer, I am prepared to make the best of it.”

Julian hesitated.

“You don’t think——” he began to Tate.

“No, it’s no use asking Miss Thurston to leave Lanyon now,” said Tate. “Miss Thurston is one of those rare people whose ideals glorify, but don’t interrupt, the common task; and Lanyon is her common task.”

Julian stared gloomily at him. There was a pathetic irony in his unquestioning acceptance of Tate as an authority upon affairs of the heart.

“I suppose there is no risk that there’s a grain of truth in this raving?” he said, holding up Lanyon’s letter. “There is no fear, I mean, that he has persuaded her to consent to this preposterous marriage?”

Tate laughed.

“My dear Julian,” he said, “Miss Thurston will only marry Lanyon or anybody else when you tell her to. So far as she is concerned, Lanyon isn’t a man, he’s a thing in a dream—as Tweedledum said to Alice. When she leaves off

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dreaming, he will cease to exist, but you cannot forcibly wake her up. Miss Thurston has learned that every mistake in this world has to be paid for—and Lanyon is her payment. She'll be very scrupulous about paying, but she won't marry him, because one does not marry a thing in a dream."

"I think you had better talk this over between yourselves," said Michal, abruptly, and moved to the door. Then she turned round. "Godfrey," she said, "you must forgive me if I seem hard and cold. If I could offer any reasonable suggestion, I would do so. I can't pretend to be pleased, but I will do whatever you tell me."

She spoke stiffly and proudly, but, as Tate saw, she was more wounded than angry.

"Yes, yes, Michal, I know," muttered Julian.

When the door had closed behind her, he turned to Tate with a very white face, and spoke hurriedly.

"You may abuse me as much as you like, Tate," he said, "I've no doubt I deserve it. Perhaps I have made the mistake of being too sure, but it seemed to me that any word spoken before the proper time would be profanity. Any personal conception of duty seems to me a very sacred thing, to be accepted unquestioningly—even though one doesn't agree. I took it that, when the right moment was come, I—she would

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in some way give a sign, a word. I should understand. . . . It seemed to me unnecessary to speak. I am, no doubt, presumptuous ; but I have felt no more anxiety than that the sun should rise to-morrow morning. There never was any question between us ; in a very beautiful way she has been my standard, the ultimate meaning of things. Everything has been a gift requiring no explanation. And, do you know, I think she understands."

He spoke with boyish embarrassment, as if wanting to have his confidence justified. Tate was a little ashamed. He had been tempted to quote ribaldry about the proper way of a man with a maid, but Julian's delicacy in refusing any clandestine understanding abashed him.

"Yes, I understand perfectly," he said, with an ironical twist of his mouth. "They generally do, as you say, accept everything as a gift. . . . But there is a more brutally practical reason for reticence. You must not only not speak to her, but you must take care that your name is not associated with hers. There is, you know, the opinion of other people to be considered."

"Surely that may be disregarded," said Julian, stiffly.

Tate was only just beginning to understand his essential simplicity.

"Has it never occurred to you that since people who haven't the privilege of knowing

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Miss Thurston may misunderstand her relation to Lanyon, some criticism may be passed on your acquaintance, not only prejudicial to her reputation, but to your position as a public man?" he asked dryly.

"Nobody who knows Miss Thurston could so misjudge her, and I habitually disregard gossip about myself," said Julian, with a touch of scorn.

Tate sighed. Really these big men were very slow.

"Yes," he said; "but have you the right to disregard anything that strikes at her through you? There are dirty dogs quite capable of using Miss Thurston's name to give you a fall. I'm afraid you have an extravagantly high opinion of the average man's generosity. I speak plainly, because the subject demands it. You must admit that, to the casual observer, Miss Thurston's circumstances are, to say the least, unusual. Of course, we know the circumstances, or rather we know Miss Thurston, which knowledge makes the circumstances of no account whatever. We are old-fashioned enough to believe that, when we know what people are, it does not matter what they appear to do; but there are plenty of clever people nowadays who will build you up a plausible conception of a person's character from actions whose motives nobody knows anything about."

“ Do you think Michal understands ? ”

“ Yes, I’m sure she understands ; but she is angry that a woman she respects and admires should compromise her order. Frankly, she hasn’t forgiven her that, and I doubt if she ever will. Not a noble feeling, you see, but very human and pardonable. Michal is not wiser, but sweeter, for her hesitation.”

They were silent for a little while. Julian took out Lanyon’s letter, and re-read it with an expression of acute suffering.

“ It is a coil,” said Tate, sympathetically, “ and I quite understand how terrible it must be for you to know that all this is going on while your hands are tied. You must not act, you must not allow your name to be breathed, for her sake as well as your own. Of course, Lanyon ought to be locked up, but you’ll have to wait until he becomes a public nuisance, because of afterwards. Don’t you see that, whenever your engagement to Miss Thurston was made public, there would be a thousand throats bellowing that Lanyon had been ‘ put away ’? Allusions to King David and the little ewe lamb, you know. . . . Of course, she isn’t his wife, but you know the tawdry sentiment. You’re a big man, and he’s a little man.”

“ There are times when I feel tempted to let everything go,” said Julian, wearily.

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"That's unworthy, and she wouldn't thank you," retorted Tate. "If you think for a moment, she's all the finer for this." He hesitated, and then continued, "Perhaps you'll consider me impertinent, but there was a mistake, you know, and it's got to be expiated somehow. In the nature of things, she's bound to be the principal sufferer, but, if I know Miss Thurston at all, she will wish you to wait for a crisis. To put the matter in a nutshell—unless Miss Thurston gives Lanyon away, he must be left to the public authorities, and, as you know, Miss Thurston won't give him away."

"What do you mean by a crisis, Tate?" asked Julian, anxiously.

"Why, before very long, Lanyon will probably do something or other to attract notice—all madmen do, sooner or later. . . . I've been thinking of a plan, if it will be any comfort to you," he added lightly. "I'll get Trevail to have me down for a week, then I can watch the situation. Lanyon doesn't like me, you know, and he will have every encouragement for an outburst. I don't mean that I shall deliberately annoy him, but I shall be on the spot in case of emergencies."

Julian raised his head with a sigh of relief.

"Thank you, Tate," he said fervently. "I shall be much happier to know that she is not quite alone."

CHAPTER XV

AUDREY THURSTON was sitting in her own room at Chy-an-dreath, when the maid announced that a gentleman, who refused his name, wished to see her. She gave orders to have him admitted, and Sir Peter Lawrence, with a great air of doing something that he oughtn't, entered the room.

Audrey rose to receive him with unsmiling composure, though he wore a knowing, out-of-bounds expression which heartily amused her. His eyes assured her that he had been young once, and his voice had an almost caressing note of magnanimity. Sir Peter swore to himself that he thoroughly understood the situation. He had performed a similar office before, for a friend, that he now proposed to attempt on Julian's behalf, and he had a very vivid memory of the lady's behaviour. Therefore he began circumspectly.

“Isn’t he wonderful!” he gasped, letting himself down into a chair, and glancing slyly round the room for the counterfeit of the man he intended.

“Who?” asked Audrey, he supposed disingenuously.

“Our Mr. Julian,” said Sir Peter, with unction, “at his age, don’t you know, though, as I said to

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Towers—Lord Ernest—Julian can be what he likes.”

In his words, as in his actions, he gave the impression of approaching his subject on tip-toe.

“ You wish to see Mr. Lanyon, perhaps ? ” asked Audrey.

“ My dear lady,” said Sir Peter, with his head on one side, “ I wish to see you. You,” he repeated, as if the information were incredible.

His smile seemed to suggest, “ Though my principles oblige me to disapprove of you publicly, as an unregenerate man I derive a subtle pleasure from your society.” He swung his leg, and gently slapped the palm of his left hand with his gloves, to intimate the complete blade he had been but for grey hairs and discretion.

“ I have known Mr. Julian for years,” he continued, in the voice of one dictating a testimonial. “ When I write my memoirs, I shall be able to say that I have given a future Prime Minister the straight tip on more than one occasion. It was I that first told him of Astbury’s death.”

Audrey had a confused idea that between themselves she was to believe Sir Peter responsible for that eminent statesman’s decease in Julian’s favour.

“ All this is very interesting,” she began.

“ Yes . . . of course,” he said, “ your interest

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is most natural—pardonable.” He eyed her reprovingly. “He has passed beyond our petty understanding, and lives—and lives; really, we need Mr. Tate!”

How eminently they needed Mr. Tate, Audrey agreed. She was puzzled, but not alarmed; she understood that it was necessary to wait patiently until Sir Peter had won through his diplomacy.

“I am resolved,” he said, shaking his head sorrowfully, “to speak for his good at the risk of paining you.”

“Not at all,” murmured Audrey, politely, though her eyes gleamed.

Sir Peter got up, and, expanding his chest, advanced to her.

“Release him,” he whispered dramatically; “set him free to his higher self. It is destiny that comes between you.”

“I assure you,” said Audrey, soberly, “that Mr. Julian is not a prisoner in this house.”

Her coolness disappointed him. He had come prepared for an affecting scene, and had pictured himself patting her on the shoulder while she wept. He had even waistcoated for the occasion. He now concluded that, unlike the other lady, who had stormed before she bargained, Audrey was merely mercenary. Sir Peter sat down again, but not disposed to come to terms with such indecent celerity.

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“Let us talk it over quietly,” he said, with all the manner of one willing to make allowances for human nature.

“I have the strongest objection to talking over anything,” said Audrey, drawing herself up a little.

Sir Peter made a gesture imploring patience.

“You have all my sympathy,” he said. “It is my sincerest wish that you shall not think ungenerously of Mr. Julian. I hope that, like myself, you will take a broad view of the matter.”

He expressed a god-like tolerance with a movement of his plump hands.

“I wish you would speak plainly,” said Audrey, with a touch of annoyance. “Did Mr. Julian entrust you with a message?”

“Mr. Julian’s true friends sometimes find it necessary in his best interests to act without his knowledge,” he said in his deepest note, nodding his head.

“Then,” said Audrey, rising, “no doubt you can continue to act in Mr. Julian’s best interests without my assistance. Meanwhile, you will excuse me leaving you now?”

Her grey eyes were dangerously warm, and her movement to the door was full of decision.

“Oh, on the contrary,” said Sir Peter, half getting up, “your presence is absolutely necessary.”

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“Kindly tell me your business and go,” said Audrey, with a little contemptuous laugh, as she returned and wearily sat down with her elbow resting on the arm of the chair.

Sir Peter was convinced that the scene was coming.

“Give him up,” he said, with affecting earnestness—“give him up.”

“But I haven’t got him,” said Audrey, tapping impatiently with her foot. “Since when, may I ask, has Mr. Julian been missing from his true friends?” Her smile broadened as the words, “Lost, a Cabinet Minister. Answers to the name of ——,” danced before her eyes.

“That is the point,” said Sir Peter, roguishly, wagging his forefinger at her. “Since he had the misfortune to meet you—misfortune, that is to say, as a public man. As a private individual,” he continued, folding his hands, and looking at her with an insinuating smile, “I think his was decidedly a good fortune. I admire his taste; I may say that I envy him.”

“You are a very offensive cad,” said Audrey, thoughtfully, as if she spoke of rather than to him.

“Your resentment is only natural,” admitted Sir Peter, with a bow. “These tender ties cannot be broken without a pang, and it is only to be supposed that the unhappy instrument of division should be abused.”

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“If you ask me,” said Audrey, softly, “the unhappy instrument of division is within measurable distance of a horsewhipping.”

“Out of consideration for your feelings,” said Sir Peter, showing his teeth ever so little, “I chose an afternoon for my visit when I learned that Mr. Lanyon had gone to Porthia. To be candid, from the window of my hotel I saw him arrive at Porthia before I decided to take train to Trenanveor. He cannot,” he said, looking at his watch, “possibly return within two hours, by which time I trust we shall have satisfactorily concluded our negotiations. But am I to understand, then,” he continued cheerfully, “that—this little affair—is with Mr. Lanyon’s connivance? If so, that complicates matters.”

“Oh, you hound!” murmured the girl, in almost admiration of his baseness.

Now that she understood him, she felt that the matter no longer concerned herself, and all her cruel instincts were roused.

“I’m a man of the world, my dear,” said Sir Peter, breezily, hitching himself sideways on his chair, and sticking his thumb in the armhole of his gaudy waistcoat. “Let us understand one another.”

“I should prefer not to soil my mind,” said Audrey.

“No; but as a woman of the world, don’t

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you think that the matter might be arranged?" said Sir Peter, narrowing his eyes to a line of immense sagacity.

"Oh, blackmail!" she cried gaily, after a moment's hesitation, as if a new light had broken upon her. "Why didn't you say so before? Well, what is the usual sum? What would you expect, now?"

Sir Peter reddened, but kept his temper.

"You misunderstand me," he said, not without dignity. "I referred to the possibility that you might see your way to accepting a sum down in consideration of—of everything. There was no promise, I presume?"

"So nice of you," said Audrey, warmly. "No, there was no promise."

Sir Peter ostentatiously made a note.

"But who pays?" she continued. "I thought you said that you were acting without Mr. Julian's knowledge?"

"At present," said Sir Peter, composedly, "I wish to spare him. Indeed," he added, as if to check her cupidity, "the whole thing depends on his knowing nothing about it until the preliminaries are settled. But if you will agree to renounce him and trust to his generosity?"

"That's rather vague, isn't it?" Her voice quivered, but whether with disappointment, mirth, or anger it was impossible to say.

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“ My plan is this,” said Sir Peter, reassuringly, and moving his chair forward. “ Can’t we settle between ourselves the terms you would be willing to accept ? ”

“ But,” objected Audrey, “ suppose Mr. Julian does not behave so generously as you seem to expect ? You must forgive my cautiousness, but I want to know exactly how I stand. We poor women have to look after our interests, you know ; ” and she turned away her head to conceal her emotion.

Sir Peter was touched. He wondered if it were the proper moment to rise and take her hand, but blew his nose instead.

“ In that case,” he said grandly, “ I will stand security for him.”

“ Capital ! ” cried Audrey, clapping her hands. “ I should prefer *not* to have New Century shares if you don’t mind.”

Sir Peter dropped his hat. He recovered it and himself immediately.

“ Ah,” he said stonily, “ you heard that I was instrumental in exposing that concern ? ”

“ Yes, I heard you were—instrumental,” said Audrey, dryly. “ However, to keep to business,” she continued in a brisk tone. “ For a consideration—at present undefined—I withdraw from competition with your daughter. Well, as a man of the world, how much do you think your

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daughter's happiness is worth? I believe," she went on mercilessly, "that it is usual to buy out competitors at somewhat inflated prices."

Before Sir Peter could think of the precise line of strategy, the maid announced Mr. Tate.

Tate coming into the room in his usual impulsive manner stopped suddenly, and glanced from one to the other. Very sensitive to atmosphere, he frowned with concern at Audrey's flushed face and dangerously sparkling eyes, and looked coldly at Sir Peter.

"Sit down, Mr. Tate," said Audrey, with a little gasp. "We are discussing a Corner in Public Persons——"

Sir Peter got up, opened his eyes very wide, and puffed out his cheeks.

"With your permission," he said, "we will discuss this matter on a more convenient occasion."

"With your permission you'll sit down," snapped Tate.

Sir Peter sat down. He put his gloves into his hat, took them out again, and stared at them in an unrecognizing sort of way, as if they had turned into a rabbit. There was a little strained silence in which Tate heard Audrey's hurried breathing. He instinctively drew a little closer to her side, and noticed that her face had gone very pale again.

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"You are a true friend of Mr. Julian's?" she asked, looking up at him. In spite of her agitation, she pronounced "true" with dissyllabic unction.

"This man has insulted you," said Tate, hotly, his quick mind jumping over the interval.

"Oh, please, please be quiet!" said Audrey; and Tate understood that she could not bear a scene.

"Sir Peter Lawrence is good enough to offer me a sum down in settlement of any claims I may have upon Mr. Godfrey Julian."

Tate winced and flushed.

"The exact sum remains to be settled. Perhaps you will consent to act as—what is the word—arbitrator?"

Tate put his hands in his pockets, walked slowly over to Sir Peter, and looked down at him.

"You very filthy scoundrel!" he said sadly. "No"—as Sir Peter dodged—"I would rather not touch you."

"I—" began Sir Peter.

"Silence!" said Tate.

He went to the door and held it open. Sir Peter would have spoken.

"My good *creature*!" said Tate, imploringly.

He led the way to the front door. Here Sir Peter made another attempt, and this time with more courage.

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“Oh, of course, you’re in it, Tate,” he blurted out.

Tate jumped his foot as one would to frighten a rat.

“I may have been mistaken, but——”

“Oh, please don’t!” said Tate, with a little shiver of loathing. “You’re too old, you know.”

Sir Peter sighed, looked into his hat, put it on, turned round, and slowly picked his way between the piles of wreckwood over the deeply furrowed sand.

Tate returned to the sitting-room and softly closed the door. Audrey was lying face downwards on the sofa, with her shoulders heaving. Tate went and stared out of the window.

“Shall I go?” he asked quietly.

“No—stay,” answered Audrey, with a gasp between the words.

Tate watched Sir Peter painfully making his way out of the yard. He waited until the landscape was clean of him, then came and kneeled on one knee beside the sofa. He touched Audrey on the arm.

“I say,” he said, “he must never know this; it would kill him.”

“Shall I ever be clean again?” she whispered.

“Don’t blaspheme,” he said, holding her hand. “I am to blame for this. I made him wait, or he would have been down like a shot and carried

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you off. I said it wouldn't do, not yet; and besides, it wasn't necessary. I told him that you were too proud to want to be helped in any way. But I had no right to say anything that would cause you to be exposed to this sort of thing. Can you forgive me?"

"I shan't forgive you if you think about me."

She sat up and pushed back her hair with both hands, holding her head for a moment between them.

"Why is it," she asked bitterly, "that we women must always drag a man down? Oh, what a fool I am! I was vain enough to think that I could help him, but I have ruined everything. I am a stain on him; when people want to insult him they will point at me."

"You mustn't say that," said Tate. "It isn't true. You made him, and he knows it; we know it—all of us who know him and you."

Audrey steadied herself, though her lips still quivered, and her breast rose at intervals in a dry sob.

"He must never see or hear of me again. I shall go away, blot myself out; anything so that my name cannot be coupled with his."

Tate shook his head.

"That would be foolish," he said, sitting beside her. "In the first place, he would drop everything to go and look for you; in the second,

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your disappearance would open all the dirty mouths—‘Why did she go away?’ . . . There’s Sir Peter, you know ; he’s very zealous for the truth. By the way,” he ventured, hoping to raise her spirits by jesting, “I shouldn’t celebrate on the strength of Sir Peter’s offer, and I should decline cheques.”

“I wasn’t quite so careful as all that,” said Audrey, with a brave attempt to smile ; “but I told him that I didn’t want New Century shares. Oh!” she cried, covering her face with her hands, “I behaved like a fishwife.”

Tate chuckled.

“Thank Heaven for your sense of humour,” he said. “I’m glad you are able to look at it like that. That’s how it is, you know ; it doesn’t really touch you—not you. . . . What did you mean exactly by a Corner in Public Persons ?”

Her eyes narrowed a little and her lip curled.

“His daughter,” she said.

“No,” said Tate, “you’re wrong there. That isn’t his real motive—I wish it were ; it would simplify matters, and keep them all in the family, so to speak. No, Sir Peter hoped for the worst he thought of you, without having to pay for it. He wanted an admission from you that he could use against Julian.”

“So that in any case I am a danger to him,” said Audrey, bitterly.

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“Only if you fail him now,” answered Tate, with emphasis. “You don’t know, Julian doesn’t know, how much you are to him. Everything depends on you; not only Julian’s personal happiness, but his whole career. Do him the honour that he does you, be sure of him, and the worst that Sir Peter and his likes can do will be so much vapour. It’s the sick man that catches the pestilence. Why,” he said, with a laugh, “it’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen. Julian is as unconscious of you as of the air he breathes. So long as you are loyal, he’ll hardly stop to speak to you; but if he looks round for you and you are not there, if he reaches out his hand and yours is not ready, he’ll go to pieces like a wheel with the centre knocked out.”

“Is that Miss Julian’s view?” she asked, with a sidelong glance at him.

“You mustn’t be ungenerous; she begins to understand you.”

“After I have been—explained!”

“Oh, well, you must allow for differences of training. You see, Miss Julian’s ideas of you were necessarily derived from people like Sir Peter; she was more than ignorant, she was ill informed.”

“And you were my apologist?”

“I did myself the pleasure of bringing two good women together.”

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Audrey smiled to herself.

"May I ask an impertinent question, Mr. Tate?"

"A dozen, if you like."

"Well, then, you risked something more than friendship in commending me to Miss Julian?"

Tate thought it was wiser to be frank.

"When Julian is comfortably settled, Miss Julian marries me," he said simply; "so you see how much depends on you."

"There is Amy Lawrence," she said acidly.

Tate suppressed his inclination to laugh at her touch of feminine smallness.

"Oh, that's out of the question," he said.

"But Miss Julian hopes for it?"

"She did, but she recognizes the eternal fitness of things in spite of all Julian's marriage would mean for us. By the way," he added, "what I have told you, or rather, what you have discovered, is for yourself. We long ago agreed that Julian mustn't be bothered with our affairs."

They were silent for a little while, and Tate noticed that immediately her attention was relaxed her brows contracted into the lines of chronic anxiety, and the melancholy curve of her mouth was intensified. As if he had read her thoughts, he said—

"Do you mind talking about Mr. Lanyon? That's what I came here for to-day."

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“No. What is it?” she asked.

“Do you know that he is dangerous, that he is mad? He wrote to Julian last week, and his letter was absolutely raving.”

“I have noticed that he is not very well,” she said warily.

Tate did not argue the misstatement.

“Well, it is worrying Julian,” he said. “Don’t you think,” he added cautiously, “that Mr. Lanyon needs somebody to take care of him?”

“Who should take care of him but I?” she asked proudly. “Oh, I don’t thank you for saying that. . . . If you knew how good he has been to me! Perhaps if I had made him happier this would not have happened to him.” She got up from the sofa. “Of course we made a horrible blunder, but I should be a poor creature if I were not prepared to bear the last consequences. No, no,” she persisted, as Tate began to speak. “If you are going to propose any interference, I shall come to the conclusion that you don’t understand me in the least. He did not suggest that?” she asked, wheeling round fiercely.

“No, of course not; he knew that it would be no use,” said Tate, grimly. “But I think that for his sake, as well as your own, something ought to be done.”

“Why?” she asked, eyeing him narrowly.

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“Well, Lanyon sane will accept the inevitable; but Lanyon—as he is—may—make things happen.”

“Do you mean—oh, you don’t think he is so bad as that?” she cried, clasping her hands together as Tate’s meaning flashed into her mind.

“Well, I don’t know,” said Tate, smiling at her unconscious betrayal of the gravity of Lanyon’s condition.

“At least,” she said incredulously, “he can’t do him any harm at that distance. Besides, he never could use violence. No, I am not afraid.”

“At any rate,” said Tate, rising to go, “promise that if Lanyon gets any worse you’ll let me know?”

“Yes, I’ll promise you that,” she said, giving him her hand.

“By the way,” said Tate, turning at the door, “I shouldn’t worry about Sir Peter. I fail to see how he can talk without doing himself more harm than anybody else.”

CHAPTER XVI

FIRED by the information that the Ship Inn is a haunt of painters, the intelligent visitor to Porthia makes his way "down along" through steep and narrow streets, dodges a headlong traffic of heavy carts and the not less demoralizing comments of perennial loungers by the Market House, and, turning to the left along Fore Street, by one of a series of tunnels and passages, gains the foreshore. As he picks his way between anchors, stepping warily over the mooring chains of the schooners and dandies nosing the beach, his imagination, prepared by reading, is doubtless busy with a scene from unspoiled Bohemia. He thinks of Stevenson's *Barbazon*, and, allowing for the difference of period, sharpens his mind against the brilliant persiflage and repartee which he is given to understand flashes to and fro in places where—

"Art is slanged o'er cheese and hunch,
Whether the great R.A.'s a bunch
Of Gods or dogs ; and whether *Punch*
Was right, about the P.R.B."

As like as not anticipation is heightened by the spectacle of young ladies at work before

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easels under the “lew” of the fisherman’s gaudy club-houses, and, with a fluttering sense of unworthiness, he ascends the slope, braves the door of the Ship, and stumbles into a lop-sided cabin with a low ceiling and sunk floor, upon a sober company of middle-aged gentlemen in choice raiment, all talking—golf.

These are the painters who discovered Porthia. Like true pioneers, they are content to say, “We found it,” leaving more pedestrian souls to come and exploit their discovery. When they are not talking golf in the Ship, they are playing it at Gwynver. A narrow frame, such as is used for displaying photographs in railway carriages, filled with sketches dedicated to the landlord, runs round the cabin; and, if the visitor’s appearance is encouraging, there is a momentary lull in the conversation while each painter’s eyes unconsciously rove to his contribution to Tommy Trevartha’s private collection. When the decorous revellers begin to talk again, they address each other pointedly by names familiar to students of the catalogues of obscurer galleries.

During the season, when Porthia is filled with stockbrokers, the painters desert the Ship and repair to the Priory—the big private hotel by the station. Here they encourage the likely visitor to play billiards, and talk about cleeks and drivers; leading him on by easy and natural

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stages to consider the picturesque elements of Porthia. Then, while chalking a cue, and with indulgent surprise—

“Fond of pictures? Drop into my studio one morning: there are some little things you might like to look at.”

The tone is careless, as of an allusion to a secretly despised hobby; but such a casual dropping-in has been known to result in forty pounds changing hands in a single morning.

Though it was not the season when Sir Peter Lawrence put up at the Priory, he was quickly discovered by the painters. One afternoon, towards the end of his visit, adjourning to the Ship for refreshment after a round of studios, he found Lanyon in solitary possession of the cabin. Sir Peter, with a lively memory of Audrey Thurston, was for the moment taken aback, but Lanyon's cordial greeting, and the extraordinary change in his appearance, quieted his apprehension while exciting his curiosity.

Lanyon's eyes were opened in a hard stare, and if Sir Peter had been a minute observer, he would have seen that one of his pupils was larger than the other, while both faced the window without shrinking; and his dry and slightly parted lips were quiveringly held in a set smile of complacency. Lanyon had blossomed out into a person of taste. Instead of the austere

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buttoned serge suit, he wore a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers of a fashionable tweed. In spite of the comparative propriety of his dress, however, there was here and there an odd lapse into slovenliness : a too bright and badly managed tie, an indifferent collar, and stockings wrinkled about the ankles.

He hailed Sir Peter with a boisterous familiarity, which the shipowner pardonably set down to the glass before him.

“ Ha, Sir Peter ! ” cried Lanyon. “ Delighted to see you. Do me the honour to join me in a glass of my friend Trewartha’s excellent cherry-whisky.”

His enunciation, though emphatic, was curiously slow and brittle, but without clearness in effect ; indeed, the last words tailed off into the compound made familiar by advertisement. Sir Peter waved a genial acceptance, and placed himself on the broad sill of the window looking out on the harbour, while, under cover of a mild conviviality, he speculated on the little game he supposed behind Lanyon’s good fellowship.

“ And how goes *The Bell* ? ” he asked, when they had pledged each other.

Lanyon made a gesture of contempt.

“ Mere pap,” he said, “ to the stuff we’re brewing.” He laughed satirically, and continued, “ There’s that fellow Tate, like the fly on the

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wheel, blind to the way he's going, and all the while assuring people that it is he that makes the wheel go round."

The freedom of his language, who generally employed an ironic subtlety, surprised Sir Peter, who made haste to order another drink. He thought to loosen Lanyon's tongue to his own profit, though he might as well have thrown matches into a blazing gasworks, for Lanyon's nerves burned up alcohol without effect.

"Ah?" said Sir Peter, interrogatively.

Lanyon produced a bundle of worn papers from his breast pocket, and with quirky smiles and an air of mystery, read over their contents in a rapid murmur. The communications were extravagant and disjointed, scraps of verse and flights of windy rhetoric; but incoherence was all one to Sir Peter, who, leaning forward with his hands on his knees, and an expression of wisdom in his dull eyes, nodded intelligently whenever Lanyon looked up and waved his hand to mark a point.

"Wonderful!" said Sir Peter, when the reading was finished. "Oh, immense!"

They shook their heads at each other for a brief space.

"Then I suppose that when Tate has comfortably buried *The Bell*, you'll start in on your own account?" asked Sir Peter, with an appropriately flippant turn of expression.

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“I shall absorb *The Bell*, and drive on with Tate shrieking at my chariot wheels,” Lanyon replied.

“And Julian, too?”

“Ah, Julian, Julian,” muttered Lanyon, “curse Julian!” The veins on his forehead swelled up, and his lips trembled with passion.

“Really?” said Sir Peter, lifting his glass, and eyeing Lanyon through lowered lids.

“I shall crush Julian,” said Lanyon, vehemently, “like that.” He made as if to crush an insect between his finger and thumb.

“In a parliamentary sense, of course,” Sir Peter demurred.

Lanyon wiped his lips, and, bending forward mysteriously—

“But who shall abide the day of His coming?” he whispered; “and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner’s fire!”

“Exactly,” said Sir Peter, misled by his allusion to standing. “Then you propose to contest him?”

“He has committed the unpardonable sin,” murmured Lanyon, impressively.

“Not retraction, surely!” exclaimed Sir Peter. “He assured me that nothing would make any difference in the policy to which he pledged himself. Oh, Julian is staunch, believe me. That is what I admire in Julian. Between

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ourselves, don't you know, there are many points on which I cordially disagree with him, but he'll stick to his principles. Oh yes," he said, wagging his grey beard and wambling a mouthful of liqueur, "Julian is staunch."

"Ass!" muttered Lanyon, with a diabolical grin. "Jelly-belly!"

"Eh?" said Sir Peter, blankly.

"Your health," replied Lanyon, gravely, raising his glass.

Sir Peter stared at him with dignity, and coughed.

"I was saying," he said firmly, "that Julian will not forsake his principles."

"No," said Lanyon. "But the Bride awaits the coming of the Bridegroom."

"Figuratively speaking," agreed Sir Peter, who attributed the exuberance of Lanyon's images to his own persistent hospitality.

"Have you seen my Beloved?" asked Lanyon, in a rapturous murmur.

"Why, no," answered Sir Peter. "Oh yes, yes ; ha, ha ! you rogue!" he corrected, with a knowing leer. "I met Miss Thurston in town. Charming lady ; oh, simply!" and he rolled his eyes.

The name, and Sir Peter's freedom, served Lanyon for one of those marvellous clutches at coherent thought which make the lunatic so baffling.

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“Miss Thurston and I are about to be married,” he said gravely.

Sir Peter pricked up his ears.

“I congratulate you,” he said, raising his glass.

“On our compliance with convention?” asked Lanyon, with a sneer.

“By no means,” Sir Peter hastened to assure him. “I was never one to condemn people who for private reasons refuse to follow the beaten track. And for my part all honour to the pioneers of a new movement. No; my congratulations are upon the occasion—and the lady.”

“Your taste is irreproachable,” said Lanyon, politely.

“Oh, well,” admitted Sir Peter, pulling down his waistcoat, “there were times.”

“And how is your charming daughter?” asked Lanyon, with his old ironical twitch.

“Oh, splendid!” said Sir Peter. “By the way, Amy would be delighted to make Miss Thurston’s acquaintance.”

“I believe Miss Thurston has had the pleasure of meeting Miss Lawrence,” said Lanyon, carelessly.

Sir Peter’s face fell.

“Indeed, who—I was unaware that—ah, no doubt Miss Julian. I remember her speaking of Miss Thurston as a friend of hers.”

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The disapproval in his voice was so unconscious that Lanyon laughed aloud. Sir Peter began to wish the interview at an end. For a fuddled man Lanyon was astonishingly agile. His announcement of his approaching marriage to Audrey Thurston threw Sir Peter off the trail he had intended to follow: he did not know where he was. Perhaps this explained Audrey's indifference to his own good offices. His conception of such a relation as he supposed between Audrey Thurston and Lanyon put her in the place of a dependent, eager to snatch at her protector's weakness or generosity. If Lanyon had offered her marriage, she was not such a fool as to reject him in order to retain her hold over Julian. It was unnecessary. To such a woman marriage was only an added convenience, and it was even possible that Julian had connived to bring it about. Unless she had already broken with Julian?

Sir Peter began to perceive that he had blundered in approaching her. He broke into a sudden sweat of terror at the thought that perhaps she had told Lanyon of his visit.

"I believe," said Lanyon, slyly, "that we may shortly expect rumours of an engagement in society."

The remark, which Sir Peter did not pretend to misunderstand, increased his uneasiness. He made haste to disclaim his reputed hopes.

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“Mere gossip,” he said airily. “My daughter and Godfrey Julian are great friends—chums, indeed. And, of course, Miss Julian is her dearest friend. I assure you there’s nothing in it.”

“Your modesty,” suggested Lanyon, with a satirical smile.

“Oh, I think I may say that Julian has ambitions,” said Sir Peter, complacently. “Of course, I admire Julian, but I should prefer not to consider him as a marrying man, don’t you know.”

His last sentence was meant to appear a vague though friendly warning. Lanyon took it though not quite in the sense intended. In spite of the morbid egoism which made him feel irresistible, he jumped at an outside opinion that Julian was not to be feared as a serious rival. He got up from the bench and threw out his chest, with an air.

“Not what you would call a likely man from a woman’s point of view, eh?”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Sir Peter, weightily. “It’s not easy to say what does tell. Fine physique, don’t you know, Julian. And his position might go a long way with an ambitious woman.”

“Oh, mere bulk may appeal to the simple animal,” said Lanyon, irritably. “But the woman with a brain, with a soul? Julian’s big enough,

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I grant you, but heavy, heavy. A woman who is at all fine prefers something a little more—*comme ça*—don't you think?"

He made a leg and twirled his moustache. A duller man than Sir Peter would have taken the comparison so crudely implied. He grasped the situation though he was insensible to the tragic absurdity of Lanyon's posturing — his desperate craving for approbation, his anxious eyes, and the haggard smile on his trembling lips.

"Possibly, possibly," admitted Sir Peter, still, however, willing to suggest danger.

"And as for position," continued Lanyon, "vulgar success, that is to say, I don't think that counts for much. Nor does intellectual power. Julian has gifts; he thinks clearly and speaks well. He can enlighten, but he can't move; he doesn't touch the emotions. Personality, address, those are the weapons."

"I see you have had experiences," said Sir Peter, jocularly; "but when I spoke of Julian as a marrying man, I meant that he would not care to be tied by the leg. And really for a man in his position it isn't necessary, don't you know. Of course, that sort of thing isn't fashionable in a statesman nowadays—not openly. Still, one hears stories. Mind you, I'm not going to suggest that Julian isn't quite—— He's cautious,

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very cautious ;" and he smiled the smile of exclusive information.

Sir Peter now felt sure of two important facts : that Lanyon was seriously jealous of Julian, and that Audrey had not told Lanyon of her interview with himself. The conclusion was that she was afraid. While incapable of a generous motive himself or of crediting it in other people, Sir Peter Lawrence was a very clever man.

" Not quite the Bayard he's supposed to be, eh ?" asked Lanyon, lighting a cigarette with a shaking hand.

" My dear sir !" said Sir Peter, protestingly.

All Lanyon's worst suspicions were roused, and he became moody and silent. Sir Peter also was thinking hard. He was not overburdened with delicacy, but he shrank from a definite accusation of immorality in Julian, though he wished to play upon Lanyon's fears that he was being duped. They sat for a while without speaking, until, shrugging off his dejection, Lanyon exclaimed—

" A fig for care ! Let us be moving."

He led the way out of the cabin, calling the time of day to the landlord with debonair familiarity.

As Sir Peter passed out at the door, a few paces behind Lanyon, a tall, melancholy, clean-shaved young man, with a handful of brushes,

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who was about to enter the inn, touched him on the arm.

“Friend of yours?” he asked in a low voice, indicating Lanyon.

Sir Peter nodded.

The tall young man tapped his forehead significantly.

“Wants looking after,” he said. “Good fun, but I should advise you to take him to a doctor.”

Sir Peter returned him a look of profound sagacity, and continued his way. He concluded that the reference was to Lanyon’s new convivial habits, which were no concern of his.

The wharf was lined with fishermen waiting their turn for the punts, already crowded with standing men, each carrying a knotted bundle of food for the night, but with always room for one more, which were being shoved off by sea-booted heroes knee deep in water, who jumped aboard at the last moment. The herring-boats, poled out along the quay, clung together like corks in a bucket, until the wind caught the frantically hoisted brown lugsails, and, with derisive yells from their crews, one boat after another broke loose from the confused mass, and swung out round the quayhead into a stately procession across the bay. White-painted eight-oared gigs, pulled by older men, slipped out of the harbour with an air of unconcern, bound for their less

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adventurous fishing in the nearer water. The place was full of movement and the sound of rattling yards and flapping sails. Even the gulls seemed to share the general excitement, and their wild *Cd ira's* mingled with the frenzied but always good-humoured shouting of the men.

As Sir Peter and his companion passed through the groups of fishermen on the wharf, Lanyon flung a careless greeting right and left.

"I'm immensely popular," he said, linking his arm in Sir Peter's; "these good fellows positively love me."

Which but confirmed Sir Peter, who was ignorant of the type, in his belief that Lanyon's eccentricity was alcoholic. He felt a little embarrassed by the amount of notice they attracted in their journey, almost a royal progress, through the streets. Lanyon, who seemed to have quite recovered his spirits, walked with head erect and a condescending smile on his lips. He had a word for every one, and apparently appreciated the laughing backward looks of the people they passed in the streets.

"You see, you see?" he hummed, pressing Sir Peter's arm. "All the girls look at me."

For his part, Sir Peter was preoccupied with the question whether he should have to invite Lanyon into the Priory, whither they were tending. He had a morbid horror of anything

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beyond the ordinary in dress or manner, and Lanyon's tie and stockings were a real grief to him. As they ascended the hill he dragged the pace, and when they reached the turn to the station, halted as if to take breath. But Lanyon had no intention of accompanying him further ; he needed solitude to enjoy himself as a child enjoys his new suit of clothes. Sir Peter used the opportunity of their parting to utter the kindly thought that was in him.

“ Any message for Julian ? ” he asked.

“ No, I think not,” said Lanyon, his face clouding again.

“ I shall be seeing him shortly,” said Sir Peter ; adding, with significant disregard of the truth, “ I haven't congratulated him on his appointment yet. The last time I saw him he was having a confab with Miss Thurston in Tate's office, on the day Astbury died.”

His hand-grip indicated a peculiar and sympathetic friendship which could be relied upon.

CHAPTER XVII

DURING the discussion of the Imperial Shipping Bill in committee, Julian's political enemies, abandoning for the moment a frontal attack, devoted their energies to calling his and public attention to the social suffering likely to result from the competition of the State in an already persecuted industry. They disclaimed all sympathy with shipowners, who, they said, could look after their own interests ; but had Mr. Julian's supporters considered the men who would be thrown out of work supposing the Bill became law ? Opposition newspapers published interviews with prominent shipbuilders, who almost tearfully explained that, as a result of the depression in trade caused by the Atlantic Combination, and in the interests of their men, they were already working at an irreducible minimum of profit. Their hearts bled at the prospect, but really the Bill was the last straw ; they would have to cut down their working expenses. And then they gave statistics of trade ; columns of figures, all pointing to the conclusion that, if His Majesty's Government seriously wished to better the conditions of labour, their true policy was a grant in aid of the

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only practical charity organization that ever was, the employers of labour in this country. They did not want much—just a little something to remember the State by; a subsidy, for example, so that they should not be compelled to forget their obligations as Imperial citizens when their good friends in America invited them to join the dance.

If the British Government couldn't see its way to helping on the cause of humanity by granting subsidies to British shipowners, there was nothing left for them but to join the trust. As Mr. Godfrey Julian had said, there was a great deal of nonsense talked about the immorality of trusts. There were people even wicked enough to blame the coal trust for the fuel famine in America, when they were assured by a humanitarian of that country that "the rights and interests of the labouring man will be cared for, not by agitators, but by the Christian men to whom God, in His infinite wisdom, has given the control of the property interests of the country."

As for the contention that trusts might grow beyond the control of legislation, that was absurd. The brainiest man of the greatest people on earth had scoffed at the very idea. In his message to his people, which one admiring British journal described as "a strident note—the note of the eagle on the wing," he gave the trusts

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plainly to understand that he was not going to have any nonsense.

“ Both kinds of federation, capitalistic and labour, can do much good, and can do evil. . . . Each must refrain from arbitrary and tyrannous interference with the rights of others. . . . Every employer and wage-earner must be guaranteed the liberty to do as he likes with his property or labour so long as he does not infringe the rights of others.”

It is no wonder that England was recommended to spend even a large sum in sending the whole of the Cabinet on a tour through the United States to learn that eagle note, and the way to get up and hustle around.

As for the idea of Imperial Federation, was there not the great brotherhood of the Anglo-Saxon race ?

Julian found all this unction more difficult to deal with than the sturdy selfishness of the business men immediately concerned. He had the courage, however, not to deny the immediate advantages of combination, nor the possible temporary evils of his policy. Then his critics called him cynical, and humorous journals published cartoons representing starving women and children on their knees to Julian with the legend—

“ They asked for bread, and he promised them an Imperial Shipping Bill.”

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Unfortunately, too, these attacks coincided with a reduction in the number of men employed at Woolwich and Chatham. A striking illustration, men said, of the advantages of State employment.

The foreign press showed a curious lack of unanimity. A German newspaper sarcastically referred to the time when the English were reckoned the most practical folk on earth ; while a Russian journal uttered a solemn warning on the sinister practicality of Julian's aims.

“ The question of British Imperial Federation, though not directly affecting Russia, is, nevertheless, fraught with great economic significance for us in the future, because of its bearing upon the stability of the English demand for our wares. For this reason, in view of our close economic relationship with England, it is worth while following with special attention a movement which has for its object the formation of a huge political trust.”

Julian was, perhaps, the best-abused man in Europe : at home, for his supposed cynical indifference to the needs of the people ; abroad, for his designs upon international trade.

In the United States practical hostility to the Bill took the form of a courtship of Canada, with the proposal that she should be given free trade on condition that she applied the American tariff against Great Britain.

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“Codlin’s the friend,” said the astute Yankees in effect, “not Short.”

But the Colonies remained enthusiastically in support of Julian. From Canada and Australia and the Cape there came suggestions for extending the principles implied in the Bill: increased colonial contribution to the Navy, of men as well as money, State purchase of cables, and a cheaper Imperial postage. The general feeling throughout the Empire was aptly summed up in the words of a responsible minister—

“I may perhaps be a dreamer, or too enthusiastic, but I do not hesitate to say that in my opinion the political federation of the Empire is within the bounds of possibility.”

Friends and foes combined to inspire Julian with a vivid sense of responsibility. Praised or abused, he was necessarily in a glaring light of discussion, and though he was indifferent to personal criticism or applause, he recognized that he no longer belonged to himself; that his words and actions, however irrelevant, would be quoted as arguments for or against his policy. His private conduct must conform to not only abstract but conventional standards of propriety; all the more because, quite against his will, he would be judged, not as an ordinary statesman, but as the political real Simon Pure.

Julian himself was too fully occupied to

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anticipate trouble, but Michal fell a prey to all sorts of dismal foreboding. She was proud of her brother, and pleased with his rapid political advancement, but some obscure vein of superstition made her distrust success. Newspapers became a terror to her, and his name on the page caused her heart to beat rapidly. So far as she was able, she censored every journal before it fell into Godfrey's hands, lest his eyes should be shocked by evil report about himself.

One afternoon in February Michal and Amy Lawrence were enjoying an hour of confidences after a *tête-à-tête* luncheon. Michal had spared the girl the pain of talking about Julian, but Amy delicately hinted that she wished her to understand that she accepted the inevitable. Her fundamentally happy little soul had passed through its bitter hour without being soured, and all her feelings towards Julian were now concentrated in a passionate loyalty, though she no longer pretended to understand him. Sitting on a footstool in her usual adoring attitude, she had cried a little against Michal's knee, and ended by saying—

“I'm so glad he never knew what a little fool I was.”

“No, I don't think he knew,” said Michal, stroking her hair. “Men are very stupid, dear, unless their inclinations are concerned.”

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"Oh, but Godfrey is so kind and generous," protested Amy.

"Yes, up to a certain point," said Michal; "but beyond that it's wiser not to expect too much. I'm getting an old woman, and I've learned that of him; so, rather than be disappointed, I don't make experiments," she continued sadly.

Amy understood of whom she was thinking.

"You don't like Miss Thurston, do you?" she asked naïvely.

"Do you?"

"I've only seen her once," said Amy, cautiously. "I thought her very beautiful and clever, and of course she was very kind to me, and all that; but I couldn't get rid of the idea that she was laughing at me all the time—not maliciously, but as if I was a funny little child. Though I can't believe what father says of her. You don't think she's a bad woman, do you?"

"No, not bad, but very unhappy. It gives you a great advantage with men, you know, to be unhappy, and they don't always stop to inquire whether it's your own fault or not. We poor things who have led ordinary quiet lives haven't a chance, and the unhappy ones can afford to laugh at us from their pedestals. But when did your father say that Miss Thurston was a bad woman?" she asked, with some anxiety.

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“Don’t you remember one night when Mr. Tate was here, and father was joking with him about the first number of *The Bell*? The moment Miss Thurston’s name was mentioned Godfrey looked round, though he was at the other end of the room, and you looked at Mr. Tate. I had often wondered who Audrey Thurston was, but I—I knew all about her then. I understood a great many things that had puzzled me,” said Amy, with a rueful smile. “Well, when we were driving home I asked father who she was, really; because I thought it was funny that I had never met her at your house. He tried to shut me up, but I was determined to find out. Then he said she was not the sort of person I should care to know; and when I reminded him that you said she was a friend of yours, he tried to get out of it by saying, ‘Oh yes, but in politics you have to know all sorts of people.’ Of course, I supposed that he had some reason for disliking Miss Thurston, and when the New Century Company came to grief, I concluded that he was afraid of her because she was too clever for him.”

“Yes, but do you think your father knows——”

“That Godfrey is in love with her?” said Amy, with the crudeness of youth. “Oh yes, because I heard him talking about them to Mr. Macfarlane. He said, ‘Well, Julian can’t marry her without hanging himself.’”

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“Who is Mr. Macfarlane?”

“Oh, he’s the editor of the *Christian Sentinel*,” said Amy, with a laugh. “Such a queer old man! He’s been at our house a great deal lately. I can’t think why father makes such a friend of him. The *Christian Sentinel* isn’t the sort of paper that would interest father, I should say; there’s nothing about the money market in it. It’s all about wickedness in high places.”

“Perhaps he wants to get some money out of your father?” suggested Michal, to cover her anxiety.

Amy shook her head.

“No; father does not give money to people who are no use to him,” said Amy, shrewdly. “But, Michal, why can’t Godfrey marry Miss Thurston if he wants to?”

“I expect your father meant that, until the Shipping Bill is passed, Godfrey dare not allow himself time to think about anything else,” answered Michal, lightly; “so you see what a politician’s wife has got to put up with.”

“You’ll be glad when he is able to get married, won’t you?” asked Amy, presently, looking up into Michal’s quiet, strong face.

“Why?” asked Michal, with a quick movement of surprise.

Amy looked confused.

“I suppose I ought not to have said that. . . .

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Oh, but, Michal, I do so want to see you happy," she added impulsively.

"My dear child, what do you mean?" said Michal; and Amy felt her tremble.

"Well, aren't you very fond of Mr. Tate?" said the girl, boldly.

Michal crimsoned and bit her lip.

"I think he writes very beautiful poetry," she said.

"Oh, go along!" said Amy, giving her arm a little affectionate squeeze.

"You most alarming young person!" said Michal, but very tenderly. "Whose character is safe from you, I wonder?"

"I think you're very mean not to confide in me," retorted Amy, in an injured tone.

Michal stooped and kissed her head, and when Amy looked up she saw that her friend's eyes were wet with tears.

"That's all right, then," she said briskly, jumping up from her stool. "Of course I felt pretty sure about it before, but now I'm quite satisfied."

After thinking over her conversation with Amy, Michal abruptly decided to go down to Cornwall. She would make no advances to Audrey Thurston, but she would satisfy her conscience by being near her in case she wanted a refuge, and she also felt that her neutral presence

in the neighbourhood would lessen the chance of scandal. She thought proudly that her name would silence tongues that might not scruple to traduce her brother. There was no reason why she should stop in town ; Godfrey was too busy to entertain or to go out, and their old companionship had declined to a barren friendliness in which both were conscious of restraint.

There was another reason which drew Michal to Trelogan, though she would hardly have admitted it even to herself. She had begun to rebel against renunciation, to wonder whether she had not ignored her own happiness long enough, and to no purpose. She would be near Tate at Trelogan, and if he pressed her—well, she was not so sure that she would put him off again.

Julian's friends saw very little of him during these days. With the discussion of amendments, the Bill passed into so many hands that it developed automatically. Things were happening all over the world to incline people's minds favourably towards the principle of Imperialization. In the inevitable reaction from the hysterical sentimentality aroused by the war, several sections of the English race were discussing their material interests, and there were signs that without some signal change of Imperial policy these discussions would harden into schemes for the welfare of

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particular Colonies as against others. There was a proposed Australian navigation law, aiming at a monopoly of coastal trade for Australian steamship owners ; a bargaining between the South African mine-owners and the home Government to make the amount of the war tax dependent upon the settlement of the labour question ; a significant hint that Canadian loyalty was a question of tariff. Unless something were done now, the tendency would be towards disintegration. At home there were half a dozen industries at a deadlock, with widespread distress owing to labour disputes, and the futility of arbitration between federations of employers and trades unions was being proved up to the hilt. Foreign nations also were waking up to the advantages of nationalization ; from France came the emphatic announcement that wireless telegraphy in that country was to remain a State monopoly, and the Germans were considering the nationalization of the tobacco industry. Public opinion in America, roused by the coal famine, was so heated that a Bill was demanded giving Congress power to seize coal-mines and their agencies of distribution. In short, on every side there was profound dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of existing laws, and a growing conviction that something in the nature of Julian's proposals was at least worth trying.

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It has been said that the moment of success is the moment of danger. It proved to be so with Godfrey Julian. With the lull in the fighting he had leisure to think about his more personal affairs, to breathe, to look at the stars—always a dangerous exercise. So long as all his faculties had been absorbed in the cares of his office, he had been compelled to leave the situation at Chy-an-dreath in Tate's hands; but now he was seized with the torturing fear that, in spite of his friend's watchfulness, some evil might happen to Audrey Thurston. If only he could see her with his own eyes, and hear from her lips that she was well and undismayed. He recognized the profound truth of the words, "Passion has but one cry, 'Oh, to touch thee, beloved!'"

On a Saturday morning, about four weeks after the second reading of the Bill, Julian was crossing Trafalgar Square on his way to his office in Whitehall. He was still young enough to feel elated by the almost certainty of success, and with the sense of physical well-being, all his more tender emotions were given free play. There were narcissi in the baskets of the flower-sellers, and the wind was out of the west, bringing remembered accents to his ear. Julian had a sudden inspiration. He stopped, hesitated, looked at his watch, and turned into the post-office.

"Chy-an-what?" asked the girl clerk, sucking

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her pencil, and glancing sideways at a client more responsive to her charms.

Julian somewhat sharply repeated not only the name, but the entire message of his second telegram.

“To Thurston, Chy-an-dreath. Coming to-day, 11.45,” he said in a clear voice.

Two or three people stood waiting in the office, amongst them a tall, clean-shaved, hard-lipped man in a long light overcoat and soft grey hat.

Two hours later the same person strolled into Sir Peter Lawrence’s office, seated himself on the table, and bit off the end of a cigar.

“Saw your great man Julian just now,” he drawled.

Sir Peter swore; the other laughed cynically.

“Guess you’ll have to come in,” he said.

“That remains to be seen,” said Sir Peter, sulkily. “However, there’s a meeting on Tuesday.”

The tall man nodded.

“What beats me,” he said, “is the casual way your people do business. The fundamental weakness of the Britisher,” he continued oracularly, waving his unlit cigar, “is his week-end. No”—as he struck a match on his boot—“that’s not a pun, but the solid truth, and the reason why we get a look in. We keep on all the time.

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Julian 'll get his Bill through all right, or I shouldn't be here swapping lies about the value of your fleet of penny steamers ; but he seems to think he can do it on his head. Well, he's not out of the wood yet."

"Where did you see Julian ?" asked Sir Peter, with mild curiosity.

The tall man told him.

"As fresh as paint," he said, "and arranging a little trip into the country to pick buttercups and daisies."

"Julian going out of town ?" said Sir Peter, incredulously.

The other nodded.

"Wherever Thurston Chy-an-dreath may be. But what's got you now ?"

Sir Peter pushed aside his papers, rose, and grabbed his hat.

"Sorry I can't stop now," he said ; "look in at the club this evening."

"All right," said the tall man, with a broad grin ; "don't tell if you'd rather not."

Sir Peter got into a hansom and drove to Julian's house in Cadogan Square. There he learned that Julian had left town by way of Paddington at 11.45, and would not return till Monday morning, or Sunday night at the earliest.

Sir Peter tried to assume a proper look of disappointment.

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“Was there any message?” the man asked.

“Oh, well, never mind,” said Sir Peter, shortly, and descended the steps.

He stood for a moment on the pavement looking up and down the long, narrow square. Sir Peter had built up his position by the prompt use of small possibilities. The cabman gently flicked his horse to intimate that time was money.

“Nearest post-office,” said Sir Peter, and sprang into the hansom.

So a second telegram was despatched to Chy-an-dreath, and in almost identical words, but this time addressed to Lanyon—

“Julian coming to-day, 11.45.”

Sir Peter hesitated, and then added the word “Lawrence.” On reflection his name would give the message a significance otherwise lacking. His work being done, and the morning fine, Sir Peter dismissed the cab, and walked soberly along Sloane Street, whilst he reviewed the possible results of his action. So far as Sir Peter could see, he himself was safe from any inconvenience. Either the message would fall flat with no harm to anybody, or it would set going an engaging sequence of scandals, with the prospect of Julian being, in his own phrase, “brushed up” at the end of it.

As he was passing through Eaton Square the

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idea occurred to him that probably Julian was taking advantage of Lanyon's absence from home. If he were away the telegram would be delivered to Audrey Thurston. Sir Peter stopped, and thoughtfully prodded the pavement with his umbrella. Well, Audrey Thurston could hardly be better informed of his good will than she was already. But if she destroyed the telegram?

"All the better," he muttered viciously, as he resumed his walk. That would stamp her guilt beyond explanation, since it would be perfectly easy for him to let Lanyon know casually that a telegram had been sent. The situation Sir Peter desired was a clandestine meeting, which could be sworn to by responsible persons. He congratulated himself on the instinct which made him sign his name to the telegram. It would make the message more valuable as evidence.

CHAPTER XVIII

FOR the last three weeks Audrey Thurston's life had been a nightmare. The more revolting features of Lanyon's disorder were now developing, and those offices which her essential tenderness would have exalted into a rite were made impossible by his monstrous attentions. She tried hard to conquer her repulsion by separating Lanyon the bodily and mentally sick man from the Lanyon she respected and liked, but the division would hold good only in her imagination. Whenever they met, the old familiar Lanyon looked and spoke through the extravagance of the lunatic.

Whether from cunning or because his exaggerated notion of personal irresistibility overcame his suspicions, Lanyon now never mentioned Julian's name. The idea of rivalry thus eliminated, he ceased threatening, and merely pleaded. Audrey found his importunity harder to bear than his anger, which would have given her at least the courage of defiance. Situated as she was, hopelessly compromised in the eyes of the world, she could advance no reason against his solicitations but that of personal distaste, which implied the criticism he was least in a condition

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to suffer patiently. Some happy instinct led Audrey to suppress any outward exhibition of fear; she tactfully threw herself on his honour, and there must have been a fine fibre in Lanyon's nature persisting through the degeneration of his reason and will, which made him respect her confidence; so that, after his first proposal of marriage, he never in his greatest urgency attempted to touch even her hand. If she had recoiled or taken active steps for self-protection, if, for example, she had locked her door at night, it is probable that Lanyon would have been roused to extremity. As it was, she lay sleepless and trembling, hearing Lanyon's uneasy footsteps pacing the passage or lingering on her threshold, knowing that there was nothing between her and unthinkable horrors but the frail barrier of a madman's declining self-respect. Short of violence Lanyon used every means—of subtle reasoning in his calmer moods, of desperate appeal during excitement—to persuade her into the promise that she would look upon him as at least a possible husband. A woman of lower ideals and more artfulness would have promised, and evaded the obligation by excuses to gain time, well aware that in the last resort she could call in help from outside; but the same self-punishing pride which forbade her to accept assistance from Julian or Tate prevented Audrey

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from humouring Lanyon. Her answer to his entreaties was always—

“No, it is impossible.”

If she scorned outside help, however, she had to bear the burden of outside pity. People were beginning to talk about Lanyon, and neighbours who had held aloof, now overlooked her anomalous position, and risked repulse in their sincere wish to be of use to her. Audrey received them courteously, but refused to discuss Lanyon beyond answering to inquiries about his health, that he was pretty well.

She was touched by the fidelity of the common people. So long as Lanyon was present his workmen gravely obeyed his wildest orders, but the moment his back was turned they laid their heads together whispering a kindly plan to defeat his ruinous intentions without seeming insubordinate. Yet in spite of their loyalty the work was seriously threatened. Lanyon became possessed of the idea that they were washing for gold and that the tin was of no value. He would go at night and fling into the stream the grey dust over which his men were “wasting their time.” He speculated wildly with his capital, and the more money he lost the more firmly he was convinced that his riches were inexhaustible.

Mr. Trevail, who accepted a paternal responsibility in the Julians’ tenants, came to Audrey one

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day with a definite complaint. One of the most striking changes in Lanyon was in his attitude towards sport. He had previously denounced even the necessary killing of animals for food, but with the development of his ideas of prowess he bought a gun, and amused himself by trying to shoot the rabbits that haunted the towans.

"Not that Cap'n Lanyon ever hits anything," said Mr. Trevail, pulling at his beard with a frown of perplexity; "but, with all due respect to you, Miss Thurston, he's not fit to carry a gun, and I've a jealous thought that there will be an accident some of these days."

"Oh, I think he's very careful," said Audrey, lightly, though she herself had felt uneasy.

Trevail shook his head.

"Anybody can see with half an eye that he's no sportsman," he said disconsolately. "Of course, I can't speak to him about it as if he were a boy, and he's got a perfect right to shoot the rabbits—if he can hit them," he added, with a grim smile.

He was grieved and disappointed that Audrey would not make use of the opportunity he had given her to confide in him her evident anxiety about Lanyon. Audrey and he were old friends; he had always had the profoundest respect and liking for Lanyon, and was one of the first persons to notice that he was not himself. As Audrey would not take the hint, he said bluntly—

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“What are you going to do by Cap’n Lanyon, Miss Thurston ?”

Audrey looked at his honest brown face, and bitterly regretted the scruples which tied her tongue. She envied the rugged old man his sober strength and unclouded outlook on life.

“I don’t quite understand what you mean,” she said nervously.

Trevail hesitated.

“Well, it isn’t for me to talk about Cap’n Lanyon’s private affairs,” he said cautiously, “but surely you must have noticed that his mind is all abroad.”

“I’m rather surprised to hear you say that,” she said coldly. “You know that Mr. Lanyon has always been what stupid people call eccentric in his ways—so have I, for the matter of that,” she added, with a mirthless laugh ; “but I thought you understood us better. . . . I suppose Mr. Tate has been talking to you about him ?” she asked, deception making her take the offensive.

Trevail looked momentarily confused.

“I’m bound to say that he has,” he admitted ; “but then, everybody is talking about him, Miss Thurston.”

His persistence made evident how seriously he took the matter, for he habitually minded his own business.

“I thought you prided yourself on never

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listening to gossip," said Audrey, scornfully, though she hated herself for wounding him.

Trevail flushed and looked annoyed.

"I am sorry that you should mistake my motive, Miss Thurston," he said stiffly; "but it needs no gossip to tell me that Cap'n Lanyon's a changed man. I can see with my own eyes that the works yonder are going to rack and ruin, though the plans and specifications he sends me make my head fair mazed. No sane man who knew as much about machinery as Cap'n Lanyon would put ideas like that on paper."

"I regret that Mr. Lanyon's—experiments put you to so much trouble," said Audrey; "but if you have any complaints to make about the way the property is treated you had better write to Mr. Lanyon."

Trevail rose.

"No, no, Miss Thurston," he protested kindly; "we're too good friends to have words like this between us. It's you that I'm thinking upon. If you'll excuse me, your whisht face makes me believe that you are more anxious about Cap'n Lanyon than you'll say. It needs more experienced hands than yours to look after him. Now," he continued coaxingly, "let my wife come and stop with you for a bit. She's a homely woman, as you know, and she'll be proud to do anything for you."

"You are very, very kind and thoughtful,"

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said Audrey, giving him her hand, "and I'm not a bit angry with you for speaking out. Mr. Lanyon has been a bit out of sorts lately, but, indeed, there's no need for you to be anxious. I'll speak to him about the gun. Give my love to Mrs. Trevail, and tell Mr. Tate I'm cross with him for not coming to see me."

She smiled bravely, but Trevail took himself away with a heavy heart.

Audrey's anxieties were, of course, doubled by these hopeless attempts to conceal Lanyon's condition. If, by any chance, they were together in the presence of a third person, she feverishly prompted and explained him. Generally, Lanyon was docile under her tutoring, but every now and then he broke into violent language, and insisted on his right to express his own ideas in his own way. Then she had to smooth over the *contres*mps, and perhaps nothing is so harrowing to a proud person as to be compelled to apologize for another. Had Lanyon been starkly mad her task would have been easier; but he had odd lapses into apparent sanity, so that people found it hard to believe that he was not wilfully playing the mountebank.

Tate persuaded Michal Julian, very much against her will, to pay a visit to Chy-an-dreath.

"What is the use, Randal?" she asked wearily. "It will seem either an empty formality,

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which Miss Thurston probably despises—besides being too late—or a piece of patronage she is sure to resent.”

“That depends on you,” said Tate, gravely. “Whatever your visit might seem to the casual observer, Miss Thurston will take it exactly as intended. You may be quite sure of that. If you go to curse she’ll know it directly you get inside the door, but if you go to bless she’ll be undyingly grateful. Don’t you see, Michal, that the thing has got beyond etiquette? From what I can learn, Miss Thurston is in actual danger from this lunatic. We owe it to Godfrey to do something, and yet I am at my wit’s end. Miss Thurston has refused my help and Trevail’s.”

“Oh,” said Michal, with a groan of disgust, “Godfrey is talked about like that!”

“No, no,” said Tate, impatiently. “Godfrey doesn’t come into the question at all, so far as these people are concerned; they only think about Miss Thurston.”

“Well, what can I do?” asked Michal. “Miss Thurston hasn’t asked me to go and see her.”

“No, of course not,” answered Tate. “Don’t you see that you are the last person in the world Miss Thurston would approach? But you can at least show her that you are her friend, and give her the opportunity to ask your protection if necessary.”

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Tate's anxiety may be gathered from this error in tactics. Unfortunately, too, when they called —for Michal would not go without him—Lanyon was at home and in his most exasperating mood. He received Michal Julian with ironical bowings and scrapings. There was a certain sympathy between the two women in that they both inwardly blamed Tate for the experiment, though Michal was merely stiff and cold, whilst Audrey shook with fear lest Lanyon should pass the bounds of decency. There was, however, small risk of an outburst. Michal's likeness to her brother seemed to recall him to his old subtlety: he was master of the situation, and seemed to take a devilish pleasure in playing upon the apprehensions of the others. They suffered the feelings of persons exposed to the unpredictable waywardness of an *enfant terrible*. Tate looked with dismay upon Michal's scornfully impassive countenance. He saw that Lanyon's innuendos went home. He spoke of Julian with mock humility, and slyly referred to Montaigne's account of the hospitable customs of certain races, involving Tate in his meaning.

"I assure you, Miss Julian," he stammered genially, "and I call Mr. Tate to witness, that, whatever the country may think, in this house we are your brother's to the last fibre. We have put our consciences—political and otherwise—entirely

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into his hands. And our political faith at least seems to be justified."

Michal hardened herself against the half-fainting woman who sat twisting her hands in the shadow. Was it for her, she thought, that she had sacrificed her youth and the happiness which might have been hers? She had put off her lover until Julian should have chosen the wife his character and position deserved: he might have married almost anybody, yet he had fallen into an infatuation for a woman, who, if she was not actually tainted, was so far compromised that he could not marry her without an explanation, which itself condemned her in the eyes of all right-thinking people. Michal felt that she might have spared herself the sacrifice. Though she never doubted Tate's constancy, she was jealous of the power of this woman, who had strained their affection so that it could never be quite the same again.

But if Michal could not soften to pity, she did not lose her sense of justice, and did her best to support Audrey by keeping a serene face through Lanyon's intolerable jocosities. When the time came for leaving, and Audrey's eyes implored her not to come again, she put into her handshake an infinitesimal pressure, if not of warmth, at least of sympathy.

Tate knew how he had blundered by the

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carriage of Michal's head and the way she pulled down her veil as they took their way over the sand.

"I'm sorry," he said penitently.

"Oh, if that were only the worst!" said Michal, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"That's the pity of it," he murmured. "There's the awful human tragedy behind all this howling farce."

"I'm afraid I can't shed tears over people who wreck their lives on principle," said Michal, coldly. "There are generally accepted rules of conduct, and the consequences of breaking them are inevitable sooner or later."

She spoke more hardly than she felt, because for the moment her displeasure was strongest against him.

"Hers was a mistake and not a crime," he ventured.

"Mistakes have to be paid for," she replied, "and the cruel thing is that innocent people are generally drawn into the settlement."

When they parted, Tate knew that for the time he had fallen from grace. It was part of the dignity of his love for Michal that, though her coldness grieved him, he did not regret the conduct which caused it. Love, pity, and loyalty were too closely bound together in his mind for that.

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“Even the best of them is but a woman,” he murmured philosophically, as he strode away from the gate of Trelogan.

It was on the following day that Audrey received her telegram from Julian. Her immediate impulse was to sit down and cry. Far more complex in her intellectual life than he, under emotion she moved simply and altogether like the sea in a spring tide. Subtlety and discretion went to the four winds: there was only one fact in the world. He was coming.

In her high conception of him and of their tacit plighting, his coming meant only one thing. In the mad, glad moments when she allowed herself to dream of the future, he always said those words, “I am come.”

She felt that she would dislike any explanations; anything in the nature of courtship. That would imply that he was not sure of her, or, at least, that he was not sure she understood. Oh, she understood; every fibre of her understood! But because his coming was sudden and sooner than she expected, she cried.

A day like this was not to be spent in tears nor was any house big enough to hold her spirit. Lanyon was away at Porthia, and being Saturday, and past twelve o'clock, the men had left the works for the day. To prevent gossip about Lanyon, Audrey had got rid of her only servant,

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and she was quite alone in the house. It was very unlikely that Lanyon would return before evening, but, in case he did, she laid the table for a meal, and placed food where he would find it, as she had often done before. Then she locked up the house, and hung the key on a nail in the window recess.

At first she felt the necessity for swift movement, and, passing up the sand-carpeted road, she gained the open down and made for the cliffs. Up here the wind was blowing freshly from the west, tossing up white water round the lighthouse, and, flowing over the land, explaining the contours of blown sand as a wave of feeling passing over a human face explains the mould of its features. Sea and sky were quick with light and colour, and with the revelation of movement and purpose something of the sadness of the land passed away. These dead mounds were not the final answer after all, and the same wind which brought the desolating sand also carried the seeds of grass and rare flowers, even now showing that the spring had returned.

All through the long afternoon Julian was coming nearer. At intervals Audrey took out her watch and compared the time with that marked in the little railway guide she carried in her pocket. Now Bristol was passed, now Exeter. Plymouth sounded a practical note; in

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three hours he would reach home. Until now Audrey had not considered the actual details of his arrival; so long as the world held only him and her, it was not necessary. But, as she went home in the dusk, and came in sight of one lighted window of Chy-an-dreath, showing that Lanyon had returned, the sordid problems of every day pressed in upon her mind. Beyond the meeting life would be smooth and certain; but now?

The difficulty of explaining Julian's intended visit decided her to say nothing at all to Lanyon. She felt that Julian himself would prefer to find the situation unprepared, and she had a proud confidence in his power to be master of whatever circumstances should arise from his meeting with Lanyon. She felt a strange thrill at the idea of leaving everything in Julian's hands—the delicious prospect of being mastered. He was coming to claim her and she was ready. His telegram had given her the right to use his protection.

Yet, as she opened the door, she paled at the prospect of those terrible hours of waiting in Lanyon's company. It was extremely unlikely, she reflected, that Julian would come over to see her until the morning, and how was she to live through the night? She leaned for a moment against the wall to control her agitation. All the blood in her body seemed to have retreated into

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her heart, and she breathed with difficulty ; her violent effort to resume her natural manner only made her more self-conscious, and she felt as if Julian's name were written in her eyes and on her forehead. It seemed as if it would be impossible for her to enter the room without saying something, and she was desperately afraid lest some impulse beyond her should force out the words, "He is coming." For several hours her whole being had been steeped in the idea of him, and it seemed incredible but that her body would involuntarily spell out the working of her mind. If only she could get into the room without betrayal, she could begin some occupation, she knew not what. She hoped that Lanyon would be in an aggressive mood so that he would be less observant.

But the moment she entered the room, Audrey knew that something had happened to reverse their positions, and that Lanyon himself had something to conceal. He looked up with a swift, involuntary glance of hate, his eyes dwelt for a moment on her face, and then dropped, narrowing in a smile of cunning. Her first feeling was one of relief; Lanyon was too pre-occupied with his own thoughts to observe her very closely.

Still uncertain of her own voice, Audrey took up a book, and sat down at the end of the table.

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Resting her forehead on her hands, she tried to read, though her eyes were constantly drawn to Lanyon's face as he sat by the fireside. Whether from the stress of some recent emotion or from the progress of his malady, Lanyon now looked very old and haggard. His cheeks had fallen in, his eyes, though opened to their widest extent, were dull and meaningless, and his lips protruded slightly, as if with the effort to keep them from trembling. His whole expression had a singular mildness, a mixture of patience and anxiety irresistibly pathetic to Audrey, in spite of her fear and repulsion. Lanyon's butterfly period in dress had quickly passed, and he now looked shabby and neglected, although Audrey exercised a constant and stealthy supervision of his clothes.

As she looked at him and thought of Julian so near, Audrey was smitten with self-reproach. Now that her own future happiness seemed assured, she could afford to be pitiful, and she doubted whether she ought not to refuse to see Julian in the morning. They had waited so long; surely they could wait a little longer? But fortunately the lurking cunning under the ruin of the man before her kept her generosity within reasonable bounds, so that she hesitated to make a vow which she certainly would have kept.

Lanyon began jokingly to chide her for the

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truancy which had compelled him to wait upon himself at table.

“ But there,” he said, “ it’s holiday weather, and when the heart is young, it’s better to take your happy thoughts out-of-doors. Well, I have had a good time to-day, too.”

He ended with a sly smile, which had the odd effect of coming a moment too late, and persisting after the mental impulse which produced it had faded away. It gave the pathetic impression of decorations left out after the *fête* is over.

Audrey was immediately on her guard. Lanyon’s last remark suggested to her that he had broken out of bounds in Porthia. She made a pretence of reading, but all the while she was listening painfully for the sound of footsteps, the advent of some person bringing evil news of him. Leaning back in her chair, she watched Lanyon over the edge of her book, and observed that he simmered with what she took to be retrospective amusement. Undoubtedly he had done something. When he caught her eye, his face became sober, and he stammered a commonplace remark about nothing in particular. He seemed to be waiting for something, and kept looking up at the clock. Once, when she looked suddenly at him, she met his eyes blazing at her with an expression of diabolical hatred, as he hastily slipped a piece of paper into his pocket.

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As the evening wore Lanyon became restless. He walked up and down the room, occasionally muttering to himself. Whenever his vague murmurs threatened to become articulate, Audrey strained her ears, but always at that moment Lanyon seemed to pull himself together, and kept silence. About eight o'clock he suddenly stopped his monotonous pacing, and spoke with firmness.

"I'm going out for a bit," he said. "Don't sit up, but leave the front door open."

He went into his own room, lingered for a few minutes, and then passed out-of-doors. Audrey sat for a while trying to compose her mind. After the first shock, her conviction that Lanyon had committed some definite act of madness which could be talked about was a positive relief. She was ready to face an emergency; it was the uncanny borderland of conduct connected with herself that made her cowardly. She wondered what time Julian would come over in the morning. It was very well, she thought, that he had arrived at an open crisis in Lanyon's behaviour; it would make it so much easier for him to act.

After a while some inexplicable uneasiness drove her into Lanyon's room. As she held the candle high, perfunctorily glancing round the room, her eyes were checked by the unfamiliar

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look of a part of the wall. She missed something, and then realized that Lanyon's gun was not in its usual place. For a moment Audrey could not remember whether it had been there when she tidied the room earlier in the day, and, as she stood mechanically staring at the spot, a piece of paper pinned flat against the wall fluttered in the draught from the open door. Bending nearer, Audrey saw that it was a telegraph-form.

"But I've got it!" she exclaimed almost hysterically; and thrusting her hand into her dress, drew out Julian's message, warm from its hiding-place in the hollow of her breast. When she put down the candle and examined the paper on the wall, she found that it was addressed to Lanyon.

"Julian coming to-day, 11.45.—LAWRENCE."

Her first feeling was indignation at the implication of the message rather than alarm. Her own thoughts were so centred on the morrow, that she did not immediately grasp the fact that Lanyon evidently expected Julian that night. That explained everything; his excitement was anticipatory, not retrospective. Her smile at the bravado of his action in placing the telegram where she found it, died away as the thought sprang into her mind, What if Julian did walk over to Chy-an-dreath that night? And she had wasted precious minutes, while Lanyon was already

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on his way to Trelogan with murder in his heart.

Anger and scorn steadied Audrey's nerves, and, though it was now past eight o'clock, and within an hour of Julian's arrival at Tolcarne, the station for Trelogan, she sat down for a moment to think out the best plan of action. Her brain was clear and quick. If Lanyon expected Julian to visit Chy-an-dreath that night, he would probably waylay him somewhere on the road from Trelogan. She decided to go to the house and ask for Tate, who, she remembered, with Trevail and his wife, was dining with Michal that evening.

Audrey sat with knitted brows for a few minutes longer to make sure that she had overlooked nothing, then rose, put on her hat and cloak, and set off rapidly for Trelogan. It was raining a little, and the sky was overclouded ; but the clean sweep and pale tones of the downs on either side of the road, and the absence of trees or bushes, made it comparatively easy to discover any one in hiding. She was not in the least afraid for herself, but she decided that, if she came upon Lanyon, she would not invite a struggle in which she might be worsted to no purpose. It would be wiser to warn Tate, who would find men at his disposal to search for and disarm Lanyon with small risk to themselves. For Lanyon himself she had now not the least

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consideration ; he was merely a dangerous wild beast, to be destroyed if necessary, rather than that any harm should happen to Julian.

Closing her eyes, Audrey tried to imagine how she would act in Lanyon's place. She would take cover behind a hedge, preferably near one of the gates, where Julian's momentary pause would give the best opportunity for careful aim. The vivid picture she called up made her shudder, and she quickened her pace, keeping a sharp look-out right and left.

CHAPTER XIX

ALL the possibilities of well-bred insolence in Michal were brought out by the interview from which, in answer to Tate's earnest message from the library, she had at first endeavoured to excuse herself on account of her other guests. Michal's little laugh of apology to them as she closed the drawing-room door; her maddeningly slow descent of the stairs, where she stopped for a moment to speak caressingly to a kitten; the cool rustle of her dress; her quiet entrance and politely surprised greeting, after which she remained pointedly standing,—all combined to impress Audrey with a passionate sense of humiliation. Her sombre eyes took in the beautiful, stately figure standing with one hand on the mantelpiece and one foot on the fender. Michal Julian, in spite of her years, had the positive blonde's privilege of wearing white triumphantly. She never shirked the advantage of her fine shoulders, and her Empire gown, cut straight across and rather unusually low, seemed to Audrey to assert the licence of a good woman to go naked and unashamed. Michal's wearing it nonchalantly seemed to imply,

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“ You daren’t, and you do well to muffle yourself to the chin in penitential grey.”

Michal stood cold and silent whilst Audrey agitatedly repeated her tale, looked into the fire, smiled ever so faintly, and finally asked, in a tone of polite incredulity—

“ How did you know that my brother was coming home to-night ? ”

Audrey was unworthily pleased to be able to explain that Julian had telegraphed to her; adding, with scornful impatience—

“ But surely that is immaterial; something ought to be done at once to prevent an accident.”

“ Yes, yes, Michal,” interrupted Tate, who felt that his presence at this threatened exposure of primitive woman was almost indecent; “ there’s no time for discussion. Trevail and I will search the grounds ; ” and he moved towards the door.

“ Pray wait a moment, Mr. Tate,” said Michal, with an amused drawl.

She seated herself with elaborate care, her elbows resting on the arms of her chair and her hands clasped.

“ I can’t believe that there is any real danger, and it seems such a pity to excite people unnecessarily,” she continued. “ Surely even Mr. Lanyon can’t object to my brother coming home to his own house. The whole thing is inexplicable to me. How did Mr. Lanyon come to know ? ”

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Did my brother telegraph to him too, or—I don't suppose you told him, did you?" she asked of Audrey, raising her eyebrows, and with a significant smile.

Her calculated intention of lowering her before Tate stung Audrey into retaliation.

"Oh, you might spare me your sarcasm now," she said. "We owe this to a person who shares your charitable opinion of me."

She gave Michal Sir Peter Lawrence's telegram, and continued in a low but shaken voice—

"If you will be good enough to grasp the meaning of that message, and consider the probable effect it would have upon a person in Mr. Lanyon's condition of mind, I think you will agree that my anxiety is not without reason."

Michal whitened as she read the telegram, but with shame rather than fear. After all, Sir Peter's brutal insinuation was only the logical extremity of her own mental attitude towards Audrey Thurston. She had endeavoured to be just, but how cruel justice can be only good people and their victims know. Michal said nothing, but handed the paper to Tate.

"Oh, you poor soul!" he cried, turning to Audrey in deep compassion. "This makes me vicious," he said, holding out the slip. "May I keep it? Michal, Michal, it is impossible to

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exaggerate the gravity of this. We must not waste any more time. Would you mind if I called Trevail?"

His abrupt movement showed pretty plainly that his asking permission was only a matter of form. He returned immediately with Trevail and his wife, for he judged acutely that Mrs. Trevail's presence would ease the tension between the two women, and he was very grateful for the tact of the bird-like little lady, who at once went up to Audrey with both hands outstretched and her black eyes full of motherly tenderness.

It is probable that the Trevails had formed their own private opinion about Godfrey Julian's interest in Audrey, but there was no need to hint at that feature of the situation. Trevail seemed to grasp the essential fact by instinct.

"A madman with a gun," he said gravely. "Why, anything might happen, whoever he met." He took out his watch. "I'll go and see whether Berriman has started for the station."

Fortunately Lanyon's eccentricities had been so generally discussed of late that any further explanations to servants were unnecessary. An extra man was sent with Berriman, the coachman, to keep a sharp look-out on the road, and to warn the police as they drove past the station. Tate and Trevail would search the grounds themselves, and remain on guard until Julian had safely

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reached home. Just as the two men were leaving the room, Tate stopped.

“There’s a possibility we’ve overlooked,” he said thoughtfully, “and it might be rather important. The last time Julian came down he went on to Trenanveor. Did he say in his wire that he was to be met anywhere?”

Trenanveor was two stations further down the line, at the northern opening of the wide valley which, running between the two bays of Porthia and Porthleu, makes the Land’s End district of Cornwall almost an island. A person walking from Trenanveor to Trelogan would pass Chyan-dreath on the way.

“No,” said Michal, wonderingly. “I took it for granted that he would get out at Tolcarne as usual, so I told Berriman to meet him there. You don’t think——”

But Audrey understood Tate only too clearly. She sprang from her chair in an access of terror.

“Oh, how foolish of me! I never thought of that,” she cried. “Of course, that was why I saw nothing of Chris on the road.”

She looked at Tate, who nodded.

“Exactly,” he said. “I don’t think it’s at all likely that Julian would choose a five-mile walk on a night like this, but it’s highly probable that Mr. Lanyon expects him to come from Trenanveor, because——”

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He stopped in some embarrassment, but Audrey was too frightened to regard her feelings.

“Don’t let us stand arguing here,” she said, catching up her cloak. “I will go at once; I can run fast.”

Tate shook his head.

“No; you wouldn’t have time. I’ll ride.”

Half unwilling and wholly incredulous, Mr. Trevail moved to the door.

“I’ll get Nero saddled at once,” he said.

While he was out of the room, Tate tried to reassure the two women, for Michal was now almost as frightened as Audrey.

“I think it’s almost certain that Julian will get out of the train at Tolcarne, and, if Mr. Lanyon expects him to come the other way, so much the better. There’s just the possibility, that’s all. If I am correct, and Mr. Lanyon really has some design to attack Godfrey, he will probably be waiting about near Chy-an-dreath. But I shall have plenty of time to get well on the road before Godfrey could reach that place, supposing the unforeseen happened, and he came from Trenanvor.”

Trevail himself brought Nero round to the door. Tate went out, and Michal followed him.

“Oh, be very careful,” she said, as Tate stood in the hall, hunting for his cap.

"I think it's a good job that this has happened," he said lightly; "it will put an end to Mr. Lanyon's little eccentricities. It has also given us a clear idea of Lawrence's goodwill towards Godfrey," he added, with a laugh. "Where on earth is my cap? Oh, I remember now, I left it upstairs. Never mind, this'll do."

He reached down an old soft hat of Julian's, and opened the door. Michal moved irresolutely, and finally descended the steps after him. Tate was halfway to the saddle when she called—

"Randal!"

Tate dismounted.

"Randal," said Michal, "I behaved brutally to you yesterday. Forgive me, dear."

She put out her hands with a passionate gesture, drew down his head, and kissed him, regardless of Mr. Trevail, who discreetly stroked Nero's nose.

"God bless you, dear," she murmured, holding him for a moment.

Tate sprang into the saddle with a laugh of inexpressible tenderness, and rode away.

Michal stood with clasped hands, staring down the drive until the sound of Nero's hoofs could no longer be heard. Then, very wearily, she dragged her feet up the steps, crossed the hall, re-entered the library, and sank into a chair.

Mrs. Trevail had made herself comfortable

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in a corner and was soberly knitting. Certain private opinions of her own were being strikingly vindicated. Whether because she was unimaginative or with consummate tact, her attitude and expression suggested that there never had been any danger, and that all these young people were making themselves supremely ridiculous over nothing.

After a few minutes, Michal looked up at Audrey, who, sitting bolt upright and deadly pale, with her hands clasped about her knee, gazed with wide grey eyes at the opposite wall.

Michal tried to speak. Audrey rose, and, swiftly crossing the room, dropped on her knees at Michal's side.

"I am the cause of all this," she said brokenly. "Would to God he had never seen me!"

"No," said Michal, in a dull voice. "I believe you were intended to make him happy."

Perhaps some mysterious instinct told the two women that one of them was to be widowed that night. They held closer together, and for the time thought in unison, as if they had but one mind in their two bodies. Fear made them clairvoyant. Both saw the long road and Tate speeding onward. They heard the train stop, they saw Julian alight and turn towards home. The distance narrowed between him and Tate, but somewhere between the two was a place

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blacker than the rest of the night: a dark spot with a core of deadly peril—for which of them?

To both Michal and Audrey, Trevail's words came with cruel force—

“A madman with a gun. Why, anything might happen, whoever he met.”

Both were being punished—Audrey, because, in her stubborn self-martyrdom, she had refused help and warnings; Michal, for hardening her heart. Is it too much to say that she who sinned against pity and her own nature was the more fitly punished?

After a while, Michal spoke again. She gripped Audrey by the shoulder, and held her a little away.

“I can't pray till I have asked you a question,” she said roughly. “I know I have no right to ask it, but I am as God made me. Tell me before Him in Whose hands we are, Is there any reason, but the opinion of the world, why you should not be my brother's wife?”

“As I live there is no reason,” said Audrey, quietly, looking her full in the eyes.

“Then forgive me and be patient. Whatever happens you are my sister. You must not leave this house again until he bids you.”

Meanwhile, Tate was riding swiftly along the road to Chy-an-dreath. He was poignantly happy. The spice of danger in his mission appealed to

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his temperament, and he rode gallantly as one knighted by the sacramental touch of Michal's lips. Though he had said that he did not expect to meet Julian, yet the romantic twist in his nature made him half hope that Julian would act as he would have acted. He knew that he himself in Julian's place would have ignored discretion and chosen whatever road passed Audrey's dwelling. More especially by night, when her window would shine a mute welcome across the road. He had an enthusiastic appreciation of the right man and the right woman ; and that he should be a factor in bringing them together gave him a boyish, delightful sense of plotting in a high cause. He reflected, so far as his high spirits would allow him to reflect, that this night would put an end to the paralyzing situation caused by Lanyon's death in life. The crisis he had hoped for was come. This open menace of Lanyon's to the peace of his neighbours could not be glossed over, and, afterwards, Tate thought with a chuckle, there would be the reckoning with Sir Peter Lawrence.

With his descent, the desolate valley widened, and the one lighted window of Chy-an-dreath answered his eyes like a signal. Tate's pulses quickened. If Julian got out of the train at Trenanveor, he might expect to meet him about a quarter of a mile beyond Chy-an-dreath. So

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far as he could predict, the danger, if any, would lie between Lanyon's house and the church-town of Treventon, on the main road to the station. Unless Julian went across country, which was unlikely on such a dirty night, he would be compelled to pass that section of road on his way home.

Reaching the level again, Tate urged on his horse. To his right loomed up the ghostly sand-hills hiding the sea; to his left the Red River slid noiselessly over the sand. The hushed place was tense with meaning. A turn of the road showed him the long white line of surf between the two opening ridges of sand-hills beyond Lanyon's house. The snarling murmur of the sea came suddenly up with the wind upon his ear—sound and wind together as if a door had been opened. In two minutes he would have crossed the little bridge and put Chy-an-dreath behind him. Tate raised himself in his stirrups to look at the dim sea he loved so well. It was his last look, for, as he reined in his horse to take the sharp corner, the night was split with fire. Nero flung up his head, reared, swung round, and, riderless, galloped back along the road he had come.

Lanyon stepped from behind a pile of wreck-wood and stood for a moment motionless by the side of Tate's fallen figure, with his hand outstretched as if in commination. Then, shouldering

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his gun, he turned about, and plodded through the sand in the direction of Treventon.

Sam Rundle, the coastguard, was just sitting down to supper when Lanyon knocked at the door, a slow triple knock like a solemn summons. In answer to Rundle's "Come inside, please," Lanyon entered quietly, set his gun in a corner, and seated himself before the fire. He was very pale, but showed no excitement beyond a curious exaltation.

"Whatever are'ee after now, Cap'n Lanyon?" asked Rundle, with respectful curiosity.

Lanyon stretched out his arm, and let it fall with an impressive gesture.

"The Lord gave him into my hand," he said, with tremendous gravity. He folded his arms, and allowed his chin to sink forward on his breast.

Rundle looked uneasily at his wife, who telegraphed that he was not to invite Lanyon to take supper with them.

"Bin hunting, then, hav'ee?" asked Rundle, cautiously, standing between Lanyon and his gun.

Lanyon slowly got up, and striking a Napoleonic attitude, oddly disturbed by the palsied tremor of his head, broke out into an incoherent diatribe.

He had been commissioned by the Almighty to destroy "the man Julian," who had committed

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the unpardonable sin of attempting the chosen Bride. Like him who violated the Ark of the Covenant, "the man Julian" had perished by sudden fire, of which he, Lanyon, was the agent.

"Aw my dear life!" whimpered Mrs. Rundle, terrified by Lanyon's Scriptural allusions, "whatever hav'ee done?"

"Silence, woman!" said Rundle, sternly. "'Tis all a passel of wind and foolishness, I reckon, for Squire Julian is away up to Parliament. Howsomever, do you go for Sergeant Rosewall, and I'll bide here along o' Cap'n Lanyon."

Rundle was quite prepared for a struggle, but Lanyon made no effort to escape. Indeed, in a low voice and with a grandiose manner, he tried to explain that he was destined to suffer the law of men who would kill his earthly body that he might be made glorious; but Sam Rundle bade him keep silence. Only half convinced that Lanyon actually had committed violence upon somebody, the coastguard's professional scruples kept him from trespassing upon the province of the civil law. When Sergeant Rosewall arrived, Rundle formally handed over his prisoner as a person dangerous to the peace of His Majesty's subjects. He then called his mate, and under Lanyon's directions the four men set out for Chyan-dreath.

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“Why, 'tes Mr. Tate you've bin and shut, you bloody murderer, you !” cried Rundle, stooping with his lantern to examine the body.

The sergeant hushed him with the reminder that Lanyon was now in the hands of the law, and so sacred from abuse. Lanyon himself did not seem able to understand that he had been mistaken in his act of vengeance ; apparently he regarded “Tate” and “Julian” as synonyms for the same evil personality.

Rundle was relieved to find that no immediate aid could have saved Tate, who must have died instantly. The four men stood in a little circle of light about the prostrate figure. Outside the circle lumps of darkness broke away, spinning round as the lanterns swung in their quaking hands. Neither death nor night were new things to them ; but the uncanny muttering of Lanyon, who stood bareheaded and handcuffed, the crawling murmur of the surf, and the sliding lights on the red water, unnerved them, so that at last the younger coastguard broke into sobbing curses.

“Shut up—shut up, you devil !” he shouted passionately, and, but for the sergeant, would have struck Lanyon on the mouth.

Rundle ordered him to go across to Chy-an-dreath, and warn Miss Thurston of what and whom they were bringing. For a moment the man refused to leave known horror for the unknown,

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but finally went off with long, jerky footsteps over the sand. He presently returned with the news that Chy-an-dreath was deserted. Then they carried Tate's body into the house, and a messenger was sent to learn if Mr. Julian was at home, and to inform him of Lanyon's crime.

* * * * *

Michal and Audrey sat hand in hand in the library at Trelogan, trying to pay heed to the comfortable assurances of Mrs. Trevail that they lived in the twentieth century, and in a corner of the land where crimes of violence were almost unknown. Her slow, quiet voice and short-sighted preoccupation with dropped stitches did succeed in capturing half their minds in a dazed fascination, while the other half was all the more set free to probe the night and conjure up visions of calamity. Outside, Trevail doggedly paced the drive against the possibility of Lanyon being hidden among the shrubs. When at last the wheels of Julian's dog-cart were heard in the distance, Trevail uttered a shout of relief, causing the two women to rise from their chairs and rush into the hall.

Trevail tried rapidly to explain the situation to Julian, who brushed him aside with—"Yes, I know, I know."

He entered the hall, pale and stern.

"What? From Tolcarne, of course. Have

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you all lost your heads?" he said sharply.
"Where's Tate? Why did you let him go?
Hasn't he come back yet?"

Nobody spoke, and, as if in answer, they heard the unmistakable frantic hoofs of a riderless horse tearing up the drive.

"Maybe Mr. Tate's been thrown. He is no—" began Trevail, in a weak, despairing voice.

He stopped and turned. Julian made a quick step forward, as Michal blindly put out her hands and swayed into his arms.

Only the day before Michal had said—

"Mistakes have to be paid for, and the cruel thing is that innocent people are generally drawn into the settlement."

CHAPTER XX

A THOUGHTFUL reader of periodical literature during the interval between Tate's death and Lanyon's trial would have remarked the extraordinary popular interest in the poet's affairs. His posthumous fame was immediate, and his publishers undoubtedly profited. The curious thing, however, was that Tate's untimely death seemed to have some hidden political significance. Whereas those journals which happened to be friendly to the Government, occupied themselves with his life and work as a poet, that section of the press devoted to criticism of the party in power preferred to consider him as the friend of Mr. Godfrey Julian and the colleague of Christopher Lanyon. Following the methods of the best modern historians, these ingenious journals merely stated facts and asked questions without attempting to deduce any theory from the one or to answer the other.

What were the relations, other than journalistic, between Lanyon and the man he killed? What was Lanyon's motive since, presumably, even a madman acts from motives real or imaginary? The opinion of witnesses at the inquest that

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Lanyon had mistaken the poet for Mr. Godfrey Julian would seem to be fantastic. Why should Lanyon wish to kill Mr. Godfrey Julian? Beyond this reference to Julian the newspapers rather ostentatiously avoided his name.

All the interesting details of Lanyon's past life were raked up. It was remembered that, about ten years before, he had been quite well known as an active socialistic writer and speaker. With the dissolution of the group to which he belonged, Lanyon left London, and ceased to take any part in public discussion. Then he turned up again, under a pseudonym, in the pages of *The Bell*, a journal, by the way, devoted to the support of Mr. Godfrey Julian and his interesting—though they begged to be allowed to think mistaken—ideas for the reorganization of Imperial trade. It was understood that Mr. Lanyon was unmarried, but that, true to his earlier revolutionary principles, his solitude at Chy-andreath had been shared by a lady of great beauty and accomplishment, a Miss Audrey Thurston, with whom none sympathized more than they. Possibly their cultured readers would remember that Miss Thurston was the lady who did the charming design for the cover of *The Bell*. At the inquest upon the poet, Miss Thurston stated that when she became alarmed by Mr. Lanyon's eccentric behaviour, she went over to Trelogan,

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Mr. Godfrey Julian's residence, to ask for Mr. Tate's advice and assistance. As if to anticipate any unworthy inference, they hastened to chronicle the pathetic circumstance that Mr. Tate was understood to be engaged to be married to Miss Julian, who, they were glad to learn, was recovering from the prostration into which the tragic event had thrown her.

In short, the newspapers examined Tate's and Lanyon's careers microscopically up to the moment of the crime, when they left off with the air of persons who would rather not express an opinion. Not even Fame shouts louder than discretion, and the careful reader was justified in supposing that something was involved in the tragedy which did not come out at the inquest; and though the result of Lanyon's trial was a foregone conclusion, so far as himself was concerned, since he was obviously insane, clubs and drawing-rooms were pleasantly thrilled by the prospect of sensational disclosures concerning other people.

Mr. Justice Wedmore, to whom the accidents of Circuit entrusted the formality of trying Christopher Lanyon, was notorious for his disregard of persons and his austere conception of social morality. It had been said that while circumstances only allowed him to punish the technical crime, he tried the breach of ethical principle.

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In person Mr. Justice Wedmore was a lean, handsome man, with a high, narrow head, and an expression, particularly about the mouth, of singular sweetness, which made the severity of his judgments all the more disconcerting. He was frequently mistaken for a dignitary of the Roman Church.

In his preliminary address to the jury, he reminded them that their business was to determine whether the prisoner did or did not commit the crime with which he was charged, and whether he was responsible for his actions at the time. They were not to allow themselves to be biassed by local gossip as to the condition of the prisoner's mind before or after the event. The evidence of certain witnesses, and the testimony of medical experts, would be taken upon that point.

Lanyon's entrance into the court would have been ludicrous but for the tragic occasion. He seemed to be unconscious of everything but his own importance, pacing slowly into the dock with an air of dignity that ill-became his undersized figure. He gravely saluted the court, indicated to the two warders, whom he evidently regarded as an escort of honour, that he could dispense with their attendance, and stood with his arms folded, his head thrown back, and a fixed smile of condescension upon his ghastly

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features. He was so absorbed in self-contemplation that he did not appear even to recognize Audrey Thurston when she went into the witness-box.

The examining counsel treated Audrey with cold consideration, asking her merely formal questions, and punctiliosely keeping to the actual events of the evening on which the crime was committed. Audrey, who had braced herself against a more exacting ordeal, felt inwardly disturbed, but gave her evidence with quiet candour. Mr. Trevail was the next witness examined, and then Sam Rundle and Sergeant Rosewall. Mr. Julian, who made a centre of interest in the body of the court, was not called as a witness, the judge explaining that, according to the coroner's report, he had no material evidence to give, having reached home after everything was over.

Then there was a pause, and the judge turned over his papers. The cold, grey, crowded court-house, symbolically darkened, echoed with a deep sigh of disappointment. There was nothing, then, to look forward to but the medical evidence and the judge's summing up, since the verdict and sentence could be predicted by the least-informed person present. For three minutes there was a dead silence, and everybody's eyes but the prisoner's were fixed on the judge's clear-cut,

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handsome features. Entirely unmoved by the tension in the court, he continued to search amongst his documents until he had found a crumpled slip of pink paper. Then he cleared his throat, and in a dry, level voice addressed the jury. Since the evidence against the prisoner, though apparently conclusive, was entirely circumstantial—the prisoner's own confession applying to a different person from the murdered man—it was their duty to consider the question of motive. The only evidence bearing on motive was contained in a telegraphic message addressed to the prisoner, which had been found in his victim's pocket and handed into court by the coroner. The jury, and here the judge raised his voice a little, would have to consider the import of that message as affecting the prisoner's conduct and the circumstances under which it came into the possession of the murdered man. The sender of the telegram would first be examined.

Sir Peter Lawrence made his way from the back of the court unwillingly enough. Preoccupation with his artistically prepared evidence made him look almost venerable, and his oath was an edification. He was too frightened to attempt anything more than a vindication of himself, and he did it well.

Did he know the prisoner? Oh yes. Had he observed that he was mentally afflicted? He

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had observed that he was suffering from some great sorrow. Yes, he had sent the telegram. Why? There was a momentary hesitation which gained him the sympathy of almost everybody in court. He had sent the telegram as a friend. Of the prisoner? Yes; but more particularly as a friend of the person mentioned in the telegram. Here counsel saved him further embarrassment.

When Sir Peter had ceased to impress and mystify the court, the judge's thin voice was heard announcing that in order that the jury might properly appreciate the effect of the telegram on the prisoner's mind, the witness Audrey Thurston would be recalled.

At the sound of Audrey's name Julian half rose from his seat, but, recognizing the hopelessness of intervening, sat down again. A cruel murmur as of hungry beasts ran through the court. As Audrey stepped into the witness-box, Julian bent forward, and a single glance of passionate comprehension passed between them. Audrey smiled, and drew up her head a little. She perfectly understood that, not the poor lunatic, but herself and Julian were to be tried, and that they owed it to each other to suffer the trial without flinching as without protest.

She knew that in all that crowded room there would be no sympathy with her, but she was not afraid. A little scornful, perhaps, at first, but

even her scorn was touched with pity for all those people with dead souls who were cruel because they were afraid. With pity came the recognition that properly it was not she and Julian who were to be tried, but the humanity they represented, and by that law which permits men and women to be almost anything but themselves. Until that law was fulfilled, people who dared to be themselves must suffer, and the one great thing was that they should suffer with dignity. The full meaning of Julian's gospel of sacrifice had never appealed to her so strongly as in that moment. The lunatic simpering in the dock, and the judge on the bench, were but extreme symbols of the same punishment for sincerity.

To the huddled respectability in the court her very warmth and vitality seemed, as they were, a menace. She stood up, a slight, erect, grey figure with one hand resting on the rail of the witness-box. Her face was very pale but composed, as she looked round the court with gravely questioning eyes, as if searching for one person at least who was not afraid to understand. As counsel rose to examine her, the judge settled himself in his seat with an almost luxurious air, leaning back with one hand supporting his chin and one forefinger crooked round his inscrutable mouth, as if to double-lock that which was already fast closed.

At first Audrey answered her questioner with quiet clearness. She had lived with the prisoner for nine years? Yes. As his wife? No. He wished to marry her? Yes. And she had refused? Yes. Her refusal preyed upon his mind? Possibly. Yes or no? Yes. If the prisoner attributed her refusal to marry him to her interest in another man, his condition of mind was likely to render him dangerous to that man? Yes. That was why she was alarmed when she found the telegram that the prisoner had received? Yes. Did she know that the person mentioned in the telegram was coming into the neighbourhood that night? Yes. How did she know? She had received a telegram. Had she told the prisoner? No.

At this point Audrey faltered, flushed, whitened, and the court thrilled with the old lust of the arena, the cruel delight of seeing nerves laid bare and pulses throbbing. The injustice of justice, the subtle machinery of the law, left Audrey no escape from the admission that court would not, could not understand.

Why had she given the telegram to Tate? Because he asked for it. He was a friend of the person mentioned in the telegram? Yes. A close friend? A very dear friend. Likely to be informed of his private affairs? Yes. He would understand the danger following the receipt

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by the prisoner of such a telegram? Yes. And he had ridden to Chy-an-dreath to defeat the prisoner's supposed intentions? Yes. In her opinion the prisoner had mistaken him for the person mentioned in the telegram? In her opinion, yes.

Counsel bowed, and sat down. Again began that cruel, hungry murmur, but this time the beast had tasted of its prey. Heads were wagging, fingers pointing, eyes staring at Audrey, and, as she left the box, all the heads turned to gape at Julian, sitting white, stern, and impotent in the middle of the room.

And over all was the motionless figure of Lanyon, like a malign idol still simpering over the carnival of cruel folly in his honour.

The usher harshly cried, "Silence in the court!" and the medical witness was called into the box. He gave his evidence with all the glib assurance of the man of science in face of the eternal mysteries. The prisoner was suffering from a progressive and incurable form of insanity. He had delusions of grandeur, and believed himself to be Christ. He ought, said the doctor with some soreness, to have been certified as a lunatic months before. He was capable of reasoning correctly within certain limits, and would understand the meaning of the telegram he had received. The effect would be to create

an impulse which a sane person ought to have resisted. The prisoner could not; insanity implied not so much a loss of reason as an impairment of inhibition. Therefore, though the prisoner was aware of what he was doing, he could not be held responsible for his action. He would be very likely to confuse the identity of two persons, particularly at night, and when one was riding a horse and wearing a cap belonging to the other.

The judge's summing-up was a masterly appeal to the terrors and prejudices of the jury. He drew a moral from the irregular character of the prisoner's household. Crime, he said, was foreshadowed by defiance of respectability. His voice warmed with something like feeling as he described the prisoner's pathetic wish to repair his error by marrying the woman with whom he lived. There must have been a strong reason for her refusal to comply with a proposition so advantageous to herself. Was it likely that the prisoner would remain in ignorance of that reason? Undoubtedly the prisoner knew the reason why his generous offer was rejected. The judge asked the jury to consider the effect of that knowledge on a man whose mind was already trembling on the borderland of insanity. The prisoner was known to be a man of eccentric views, but all his tendencies were in the

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direction of kindness and humanity. He was the last man in the world to commit an act of violence. It was not the judge's province to accuse: he left the jury to form their own conclusions upon whom rested the responsibility for the prisoner's pitiable condition. Nor would he suggest a reason why the plain warnings of mental aberration were neglected.

On the day of the murder the prisoner received a telegram informing him that the person who stood between him and the woman he wished to marry was coming unexpectedly into the neighbourhood. No doubt it was injudicious to send such a telegram to a man in the prisoner's state of mind, but the sender's frank and manly evidence showed that he acted from a good motive; he wished to prevent what, correctly or incorrectly, he took to be a clandestine meeting. He was a friend of the person mentioned in the telegram, and he acted in his better interests and in the name of morality. Finally, the judge said that, though he had no wish to cast an aspersion on the character of a dead man, there was every reason to suppose that the prisoner's victim was in the confidence of him whose disastrous intrigue prepared the way for the prisoner's crime.

The jury felt that something more was required of them than their verdict. They wished not to be cruel, but they would do their duty. After

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twenty minutes' consultation, they found the prisoner guilty of wilful murder while in a state of insanity, and added a rider censuring the witness Audrey Thurston for her neglect to call in proper medical advice upon the prisoner's mental condition.

The judge passed the formal sentence consigning Lanyon to Broadmoor.

Still posing and simpering, the prisoner bowed to the court and was led away. The solemn farce was over.

Julian made his way to Audrey's side through a lane of people, whose respectful instincts struggled with their prejudices. The travesty of discretion which reserved Julian's actual name in the brow-beating of Audrey Thurston only increased public curiosity, but neither he nor she flinched before it. Their love implied all this infamy. There are some natures able to fling back the shame of the pillory upon the spectator, and these two created an atmosphere about themselves outside which the lookers-on felt inferior. The calmness of those who dare is disconcerting.

Julian's carriage was already waiting when they passed out into the courtyard. The judge had driven away. A knot of jurymen and their friends hung about the door. As Julian passed there was in their faces the shy, agonized appeal for justification of simple honest men who have

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done their painful duty by the light vouchsafed to them. They were good men and true. No power on earth would have diverted them from their verdict, yet if Julian had hesitated for one moment, they would have stammered apologies.

Julian cheerfully greeted by name one or two men he knew, handed Audrey to the carriage, got in, and closed the door. Nobody ever knew how it happened or who began it, but, as the carriage moved, there was a sudden outpushing into the yard, a hat raised, and then a loud hysterical cheer. It was the tribute of the inglorious victors to the vanquished they envied after all.

“Hail and farewell,” murmured Julian, speaking for the first time.

“I have ruined you,” she gasped.

“We remain,” he replied, raising her hand to his lips.

CHAPTER XXI

JULIAN waited with a certain grim humour for the unmuzzling of the press. He knew pretty well what to expect ; the precise tone of severity, sorrow, shocked surprise, irony, or jubilation, which would be assumed by each individual journal. He felt that he could predict which organs would venture to suggest his resignation, which would savagely demand his disgrace. During the weeks before Lanyon's trial, he had been pursued by the idea of excited editors panting under the restraints of judicial procedure. He knew that nobody would speak openly until Lanyon had passed through the hands of the law, and the muttering and whispering in the interval reminded him of the tuning of an orchestra to be conducted by Mr. Justice Wedmore. Each instrument only waited on his bâton to add its particular note to the raucous strains of the Rogue's March.

In effect, however, the newspapers behaved better than might have been expected. Their tone, generally, was one of regret, and if here and there was a subdued *harmonic* of chastened congratulation to the Opposition, the performer was only human. Even those journals which bitterly

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and unscrupulously had opposed the Shipping Bill seemed to feel that they were in a position to be generous. A triumph so unexpected, so complete, was more properly the occasion for quiet thankfulness than for indecent rejoicing over the fall of Mr. Godfrey Julian. Still, for him, the result was the same, and his resignation was received in a sympathetic silence.

Julian was too sane to assume that he was the victim of persecution by his political opponents. He recognized that it was an unlucky accident, clumsily engineered by Sir Peter Lawrence, which had delivered him naked and bound into the hands of the enemy. Nor did he blame them for making use of their opportunity. It was part of the game, and though he himself took a higher view of politics, he did not flatter himself on his superiority, or complain because other people accepted an absurd standard. It was again part of the convention that a man and his work should be judged together, and, though he did not admit that he had broken any moral law, he knew that the great majority would hold him guilty. Some of his more enthusiastic followers urged him to show fight, but Julian was wiser. There was precedent that his name would discredit any cause in the public mind. He knew when he was beaten.

He knew also that he had failed in a bigger

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sense than was apparent to those who congratulated themselves on his downfall. It had been precisely his task to convince people that the traditions, whether personal or Imperial, which they so pathetically cherished were a hindrance to their growth. His mission had been to persuade them to consider their private and public affairs in relation to the future of the whole race ; he was triumphantly condemned by an appeal to their prejudices on a particular institution belonging to the age of barbarism. Once more the spirit had succumbed to the letter. The crowd had won.

This, however, was knowledge for himself and those who shared his enlightenment. To the unthinking he had achieved at least his immediate object, since the Shipping Bill passed its third reading in the Commons, was slept upon in the Lords, and became law. Certain gentlemen who had loyally worked for Julian, in the House and out of it, now sat down and waited for the millennium. It was only natural, after all, that they should mistake the first outward and visible expression of a better faith for a universal panacea. We have not yet outgrown the age of Morrison's Pills.

With Lanyon's life in death between them, Audrey and Julian felt that it would be impossible for them to come together ; so Julian wisely took

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himself off to forget politics by the Danube. And here, after the first bitterness of personal defeat was over, he began to understand that perhaps his loss was the gain of his work. Leisure and detachment have their own value, and the man is more important and sometimes more powerful than the official. Julian was comforted by signs that, short though his career had been, he had left his mark upon political thought. Out of the noisy and facile Imperialism of the crowd was emerging a definite idea of the Empire as a single organism, responsive to its extreme boundaries, self-supporting, and growing, not by expansion, but by the harmonious evolution of its internal resources. Far-sighted and patient men, undoubtedly inspired by his example, were devoting themselves to the consideration, not of the present crisis, but of the ultimate issue. Their methods, so much more a matter of what not to do than what to do, were slow and unpicturesque, as must be every process which takes into account, not how fast, but whither you are going. They would make many mistakes, these men; their best efforts would be full of anomalies, negligences, and actual injustice, because it is very much harder to be wise than to be clever.

There were symptoms, too, that, apart from those who were consciously devoted to the service of humanity, the world was very weary of the old

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order. Men were beginning to distrust success, and the cocksure conclusions of material science. Progress, as understood, cancelled out in the acts of its very apostles. As the robber-knights of the Middle Ages commended their souls to God by building cathedrals, so now the great captains of industry endeavoured to make their peace with humanity by founding libraries and universities. Each act was equally a tacit admission of wrong-doing ; each endowment silently pointed to the ideal sinned against ; and the step between expiation and a new life is not so very wide.

Thinking over these things in solitude, Julian began to see where his future work lay. If he could no longer speak, he could write ; and there could be no better memorial to the friend who literally had laid down his life for him than humbly to take up his pen.

Sir Peter Lawrence never could make up his mind whether to congratulate himself on his escape from the public censure he deserved, or boldly to claim his deliberate share, successful beyond his wildest dreams, in the wrecking of Godfrey Julian's political career. We may leave him as one lifted from the commonplace by the inner knowledge that he too had controlled the affairs of State. His friends observed that when, in expansive moments, he sagely wagged his head over the secret history of the Imperial Shipping Bill, a

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word or even a glance from his daughter would cause him to change the subject.

Miss Lawrence gained a quite undeserved reputation for profundity. People even say that Lord Ernest Towers married her on the strength of it, though it is pleasant to record that his immediate disillusion did not spoil the happiness of their state.

When the news of Lanyon's death reached him, Julian at once started for home. During his absence Michal and Audrey had remained together at Trelogan, and, as is so often the case with two persons who begin with sincerely opposite conceptions of life, they had reached a common understanding, out of which grew a very firm affection.

With Julian's return, the date of his marriage was at once settled upon. By temperament, and still more from the baptism of sorrow through which they had passed, both he and Audrey were averse from the spectacular evolutions of courtship. That love which begins with the brain is perhaps not the least promising for continued happiness, and sincerity, like salt, is a grand preservative against the effect of time.

It was Michal who proposed the visit to Chyan-dreath, and the others took it as an intimation that her sorrow for Tate was without bitterness against themselves. By Julian's wish the place

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had not been relet, and they found the great wheel motionless and already moss-grown, and the dressing-floors choked with sand. There is nothing more suggestively sad than machinery standing idle, as there is nothing that more quickly takes on a quite human aspect of demoralization. An abandoned engine is like a ruined man—one thinks of the might-have-beens.

Yet, amidst all this desolation and decay, the water, a little more powerful than the sand, was still flowing through the channels and keeping them clear. Only in one place where a channel had been blocked by the careless leaving-down of a hatch, the water had overflowed, creating a cankered spot of rusted iron and rotting wood-work. That crude force diverted from the river a mile or so higher up, and, educated by cunning division and subdivision through branching arteries into almost conscious utility, quietly and persistently delivered its message to them that had eyes to see. Lanyon's delusion that he washed for gold was, perhaps, not so mad, after all, though he had failed to learn his lesson. That was left for these others. It needed his madness and Tate's death to teach them that neither by standing on one side and letting the stream go by, nor by thrusting in the arbitrary barriers of human prejudice, is the meaning of life fulfilled; that it was their duty neither to neglect, hurry, nor

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obstruct, but wisely to wait upon life in all its manifestations. Light-heartedly and by divine instinct the dead poet had been wiser than them all, and he had died that they might learn.

“I thought of having the place pulled down,” said Julian, as they turned to go; “but——” He looked at Michal.

“No,” she said. “It is the record of a failure, but it is also the memorial of a great success.”

THE END

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